AN ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S SELF-SYSTEM PROCESSES IN RELATION TO GENDER, AGE, AND LENGTH OF STAY IN A RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE FACILITY

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Not to us, O Lord, not to us
but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness.
Psalm 115:1

Believing that God called me to the task of completing this degree, I wish, first and foremost, to acknowledge His goodness in giving me the privilege and ability to accomplish the task. I also acknowledge His faithfulness in providing the resources needed to fulfill the goal.

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory
in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations.
Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

School is the central cultural enterprise of children (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). It is the context in which children begin to develop a sense of industry (Erickson, 1963). Engagement in school is crucial to children's academic success. Engagement refers to the intensity and emotional quality of children's involvement in initiating and carrying out learning activities. Children who are more engaged in school earn higher grades, score higher on standardized tests of achievement, and show better personal adjustment to school (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Engaged children also are more likely to receive approval from peers (Sage & Kindermann, 1999).

Engagement in school is closely linked to motivation. Developmentalists have long been interested in how motivation develops and changes throughout the lifespan. Educators have also focused on children's motivation: a review of motivational research in education traces literature to the 1930's (Weiner, 1990). Theories of motivation focus, in differing degrees, on individual internal processes and on the social context. Internal processes relate to basic psychological needs while the social context is the environment in which action takes place. The social context may facilitate or inhibit motivation by its provision for basic psychological needs. In relation to educational motivation

and engagement in learning activities, the question arises as to what social contexts facilitate or inhibit motivation for learning. Of special interest is the motivation of children who have experienced abusive, neglectful, or highly stressful environments.

Theoretical Background

Motivation can be broadly viewed as falling along a continuum ranging from the mechanistic to the organismic (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Mechanistic theories of motivation view humans as passive, subject to control by physiological drives and environmental stimuli. Organismic theories view humans as active, with an innate tendency toward "assimilating new information, exploring new terrain, and internalizing and integrating ambient practices and values" (Ryan & Powelson, 1992, p. 51).

Mechanistic theories began with the postulate that behavior can be reduced to a small number of physiological drives. Within the psychoanalytic tradition, Freud's (1915) instinct theory asserted two important drives (sex and aggression). The drive of peripheral mechanisms is seen also in Skinner's (1938) work in the effects of stimuli on behavior. Cognitive theories may also be viewed as mechanistic. Rather than focusing on past consequences of behavior, cognitive theories emphasize expectations and incentives as the impetus and guide for behavior (Heckhausen, 1991). Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the importance of outcome expectancy (the estimate that a given

behavior will produce a certain outcome), but adds the dimension of efficacy – the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcome.

Organismic theories grew out of the inadequacy of drive theories for explaining complex human behaviors. A tendency toward increasing autonomy, or self-determination, was proposed by Angyal (1941) as a motivational pattern of the life process. White (1959) recognized innate motivation in humans and proposed the concept of *effectance motivation* – an outgrowth of a sense of competence in acting on the environment -- as the source of energy (motivation) for a wide variety of behaviors. Similarly, personal causation was postulated by deCharms (1968) as motivation for behavior. According to deCharms, the primary motivation of humans is to be effective in producing change in their environment.

More recently, Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory and Connell's (1990) process model also reflect the organismic approach. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) asserts that humans are intrinsically motivated in two directions that represent the most basic and important strivings of personality and self (Ryan & Powelson, 1992). The first direction concerns the elaboration and extension of one's capacities and interests, and is represented by the need for a sense of competence and a sense of autonomy. The second direction is the striving for cohesion and integration with one's social context, and is represented by the need for relatedness. Fulfillment of these three

fundamental psychological needs is inextricably tied to the social context, not in the sense that the social context shapes, guides, or determines behavior, but rather that it provides the necessary nutriments for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Background of the Problem

The social context may facilitate or inhibit the fulfillment of psychological needs that contribute to motivation (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Unfortunately, many children do not experience a social context that facilitates growth of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Between 1986 and 1993, the total number of children seriously injured and the total number endangered both quadrupled (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). The most recent data indicates that in 1996 child protective services agencies investigated two million reports alleging maltreatment of children. Almost one million of those reports were substantiated – an 18 percent increase over 1990 statistics. An estimated 1,077 child maltreatment fatalities occurred during 1996 (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

In addition to maltreatment, children in the United States are exposed to other stressful life events such as poverty, serious illness or death of a family member, family conflict and violence, and parental alcoholism. One child out of five lives in poverty (Gestwicki, 1996). Divorce rates have increased to the point that one child in two is likely to experience parental divorce before the age of 18

(Grych & Fincham, 1997). Approximately 6.6 million children are being raised by at least one alcoholic parent (Chassin, Barrera, & Montgomery, 1997).

The effects of traumatic and difficult events are evidenced in children's development. Maltreatment and neglect negatively affect children's school performance and behavior (Eckenrode, Laird & Doris, 1993; Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996; Leiter & Johnsen, 1994), social cognitive development (Barahal, Waterman & Martin, 1981), peer relations (Mueller & Silverman, 1989), and self-esteem and motivation (Barnett, Vondra, & Shonk, 1996; Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1981). Poverty impacts children's IQ scores and behavior (Sameroff & Seifer, 1995). Parental conflict and divorce can be linked to emotional and behavioral maladjustment and poor academic achievement, social adjustment, and self-concept (Amato & Keith, 1991). Children of alcoholics are at risk for alcohol and drug abuse, externalizing and internalizing/emotional problems, and poor academic achievement (Chassin, et. al., 1997).

Within these risk factors, children's age and gender have been found to moderate the effects on children's functioning and to influence methods of coping with stressful situations. Boys in early and middle childhood are reported to be at greater risk for poor adjustment following a stressful life event than girls (Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1996). In coping with stressful life events, girls tend to rely on social support more than boys while boys resort to wishful thinking and resignation (Stark, Spirito, Williams, & Guevremont, 1989). Younger children tend to use approach/avoidance or

problem/emotion focused strategies for coping with stress while adolescents, as they develop cognitively and become aware of a wider variety of coping strategies, tend to use cognitive strategies to reduce emotional discomfort (Fields & Prinz, 1997).

Children who experience maltreatment, stress, trauma, or behavioral problems are often referred to child welfare agencies. Mental health and other social services attempt to alleviate problems, but removal from the home is the outcome of many investigations. In the United States, there are currently more than 500,000 children in the care of government-run child care systems, and many others are in private residential care facilities (McKenzie, 1999). Out-of-home placements may be in a children's home, group home, or foster family home.

The goal of residential care facilities is, first of all, to provide a safe, secure environment for children; however, the growth and development of children are also of great importance. Most out-of-home placements provide educational opportunities, counseling, positive role models, and environments of care and concern in order to meet the emotional, psychological, and educational needs of children. Research has shown that children can make significant developmental gains even when they have experienced trauma and stress and have been separated from their families (Friman, Osgood, Smith, Shanahan, Thompson, Larzelere, & Daly, 1996; Goodman, Emery, & Haugaard, 1998). Additionally, some studies show that positive effects of a stable, supportive environment in a

residential placement can increase with length of stay (Friman, et al., 1996; Goodman, et al., 1998), but factors such as gender, age at placement, time between home removal and placement, services provided, and presence of abuse/neglect in the home may moderate the gains children make while in residential care (Shealy, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Children experiencing social contexts characterized by maltreatment and stressful events are at risk for a variety of physical, psychological, and educational problems. Existing literature suggests that age and gender may moderate the effects of maltreatment and stress. Removal from such contexts and subsequent placement in a structured, supportive environment provides physical safety as well as the nutriments for fulfilling psychological needs that are important for engagement in school. Research is needed regarding the psychological needs of children in residential care and the moderating effects of age, gender, and length of stay.

Theoretical Framework

Connell's process model of motivation (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991) builds on Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination. The model is based on the premise that motivation for action in any cultural enterprise

grows out of a dialectical relationship between psychological needs and the social context. The model links the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness to precedent factors in the social surround and to antecedent self-beliefs and actions (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Connell posits that the psychological needs are facilitated - or inhibited - within the social context depending on the amount of structure, autonomy support, and involvement provided. Persons construct self-system processes, beliefs or internal representations of self, based upon how well their psychological needs are met within a given social context.

Specific self-system processes correspond to each psychological need: the need for competence results in perceived strategies and capacities for achieving particular outcomes; the need for autonomy results in self-regulation of behavior; the need for relatedness results in perceptions of emotional security and self-esteem. Patterns of action, such as the behaviors children exhibit in response to stressful situations, are a consequence of the self-system processes that arise from beliefs about self and the social context and interactions between the two. Patterns of action may be described as engaged or disaffected.

The main cultural enterprise of children is school. In order to be fully engaged in school activities and learning, children need to perceive themselves as competent, autonomous, and positively related to others and self. Children living in social contexts characterized by trauma and stress do not experience the structure, autonomy support, and involvement necessary for meeting their

psychological needs and developing self-system processes that result in successful patterns of behavior in school. Instead, they experience chaos, coercion, and neglect. Research in the areas of stress and coping provides evidence for the distress caused by such environments. Such distress in children may result in developmental outcomes and behaviors such as low self-esteem, depression, withdrawal (Sroufe, 1979), self-derogation, catastrophizing (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), anxiety, expectation of severe consequences, or opposition/defiance (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe children's self-system processes according to age, gender, and length of stay in a residential child care facility. An instrument designed according to the constructs presented in Connell's (1990) process model of motivation was used to assess the levels of perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Scores from selected scales of the Research Assessment Package for Schools - Student Form were recorded from the files of 110 children in the care of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC). Data was analyzed to determine linear relationships between theoretical constructs and children's age and length of stay with OBHC. Additionally, variances between scores for boys and girls were analyzed.

Significance of the Study

Research on children in residential care has yielded conflicting results. Orphanage alumni (sample included those who entered orphanages 1901-1961) and more recent residents of a children's home indicate positive outcomes (Friman, et al., 1996; McKenzie, 1999; Thompson, Smith, Osgood, Dowd, Friman, & Daly, 1996); group care opponents cite devastating effects of institutionalization on children (Bowlby, 1944; Spitz, 1945). The United States government favors foster care and family reunification programs in its annual $12 billion funding of substitute care (Craig & Herbert, 1999), but problems exist in these programs. Availability of foster homes is declining; children in foster care often experience multiple placements; 17% of state prisoners are former foster children; and many children are reunified with abusive families, only to be abused and returned to the child welfare system (McKenzie, 1999).

Programs that help disadvantaged children overcome the effects of abusive or stressful environments are desperately needed. Development of such programs requires knowledge of the characteristics and needs of the children they serve as well as theoretical foundations for the programs. The present study proposes one method for learning more about children who have experienced stress and trauma and have subsequently been placed in a residential care facility. This study will also test the reliability of the Research Assessment Package for Students – Student Form with children in residential care facilities. The results

can be expected to have practical implications for better understanding the needs of such children and for developing more effective programs.

Assumptions of the Theory

1. All people have fundamental psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

2. Self-system processes develop out of interaction of psychological needs and social context.

3. Aspects of the social context most relevant to meeting needs and to optimal development of self-system processes are provision of structure, autonomy support, and involvement.

4. Motivation for effective action is innate and affordance of a favorable social context will lead to effective action.

Assumptions of the Study

1. Children in out-of-home placements have experienced social contexts of chaos, coercion, and neglect.

2. The sample selected for the study is representative of children in similar child care settings.

Limitations of the Study

1. The sample for the study was smaller than originally planned and was small for the number of variables used in statistical analysis. Additionally, two campuses of OBHC serve only one gender, with more boys at Boys Ranch Town than girls at Madill Home for Girls. Unequal numbers in the single-gender residences may skew results.
2. Measurement of self-systems was accomplished through self-report. Use of self-report measures may limit the accuracy of findings due to the possibility that children may respond to test items out of social desirability (Borg & Gall, 1983). Additionally, self-report measures only children's perceptions as opposed to more objective measures such as observation.
3. Limited information on validity of measures was available. Validity of one subscale (Self-Satisfaction) seemed to be highly questionable both intuitively and statistically (high negative correlation with Relatedness to Self). Also, lack of correlations by age and length of stay for girls may indicate that the instrument was not sensitive to girls' perceptions.
4. The findings of this study may not generalize to other residential child care facilities that serve a different population of children, provide a different form of training to staff, and operate under a different model of care.

Research Questions

1. Among boys living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?
2. Among girls living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?
3. Among boys living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?
4. Among girls living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?
5. Among children in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between boys' and girls' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Definition of Terms

Autonomy – "The experience of choice in the initiation, maintenance, and regulation of behavior, and the experience of connectedness between one's actions and personal goals and values" (Connell, 1990, p. 63).

Autonomy Support - The communication of choice, room for initiative, recognition of feelings, and a sense that activity is connected to personal goals and values (Connell, 1990).

Chaos - Lack of structure in the social context, characterized by inconsistency, unpredictability, noncontingency, understimulation or challenges that are overwhelming, lack of information, lack of support for trying out strategies (Skinner & Wellborn, 1994).

Children's Home - see Residential Child Care Facility

Coercion - Lack of support for autonomy, characterized by constraint, manipulation, control of persons, withdrawal of respect, guilt induction, comparison or competition, rewards or bribes (Skinner & Wellborn, 1994).

Competence - The experience of being able to produce specific outcomes in the sense both of achieving positive ends and avoiding negative outcomes (Connell, 1990).

Foster Family Home - A residential child care facility that provides full time care for five children or less.

Group Home - A residential child care facility that provides full time care for more than five children.

Involvement - (1) The communication of interest in the individual through the dedication of natural and psychological resources; and (2) the enjoyment of the individual by those in the social surround (Connell, 1990).

Neglect – Lack of involvement from important social partners, characterized by withholding of caring, affection, warmth; lack of emotional availability; no expression of pleasure in or enjoyment of an individual (Skinner & Wellborn, 1994).

Out-of-Home Placement – The placement of a minor in a setting that provides full-time care (continuous care given for more than a 24-hour period of time). Placement may be in a residential child care facility (see below), a foster family home (full-time care for five or less children), or a group home (full-time care for more than five children).

Relatedness – The need to feel securely connected to the social surround and the need to experience oneself as worthy and capable of love (Connell, 1990).

Residential Child Care Facility – A 24-hour residential group care facility with a specified number of unrelated children living together with adults other than their parents; any public or private institution, child placing agency, foster family home, or group home providing full-time care for children away from their own homes, and which is owned or controlled by a political subdivision, a corporation, an unincorporated organization or association, or individual. (Oklahoma Department of Human Services [DHS], 1989). For the purposes of this study, the term "residential child care facility" (also known as "children's home") represents facilities operated by Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children. These facilities are contained in four campuses across the state of Oklahoma and

provide care for a maximum of eight children in a family-type setting with a houseparent couple.

Self-system Processes – Beliefs or internal representations of self that develop out of the interaction of psychological needs and social context (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Social Context – Social and physical environments that enhance or inhibit the experience of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Structure – Clearly communicated and optimally challenging expectations for and consequences of individual action; consistent administration of consequences; provision of competence-relevant feedback (Connell, 1990).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between children's self-system processes and gender, age, and length of stay in a residential child care facility. The literature related to the study and reviewed herein begins with an explanation of Connell's process model of motivation as it relates to children in their social contexts. The model will be considered in relation to children's development and gender. Research on factors that may affect children's self-systems is reviewed as well as research on residential care for children and the effects of length of stay in child care facilities. Finally, assessment of self-system processes will be considered.

Connell's Process Model of Motivation

Connell's (1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991) process model of motivation defines three psychological needs and links them to specific aspects of the social context that either facilitate or inhibit their development (See Figure 1). Additionally, the process model addresses the connection between needs and action. The defining features of the model are:

1. People have fundamental psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness;

2. Self-system processes develop out of interaction of the psychological needs and social context within cultural enterprises;
3. The aspects of the social context most relevant to the meeting of these needs, and thus to the development of self-system processes, are the provision of structure, autonomy support, and involvement;
4. Inter- and intra-individual variation in self-system processes produce variability in patterns of action (engagement or disaffection) within cultural enterprises; and
5. Engagement in cultural enterprises is manifested in affect, behavior, and cognition.

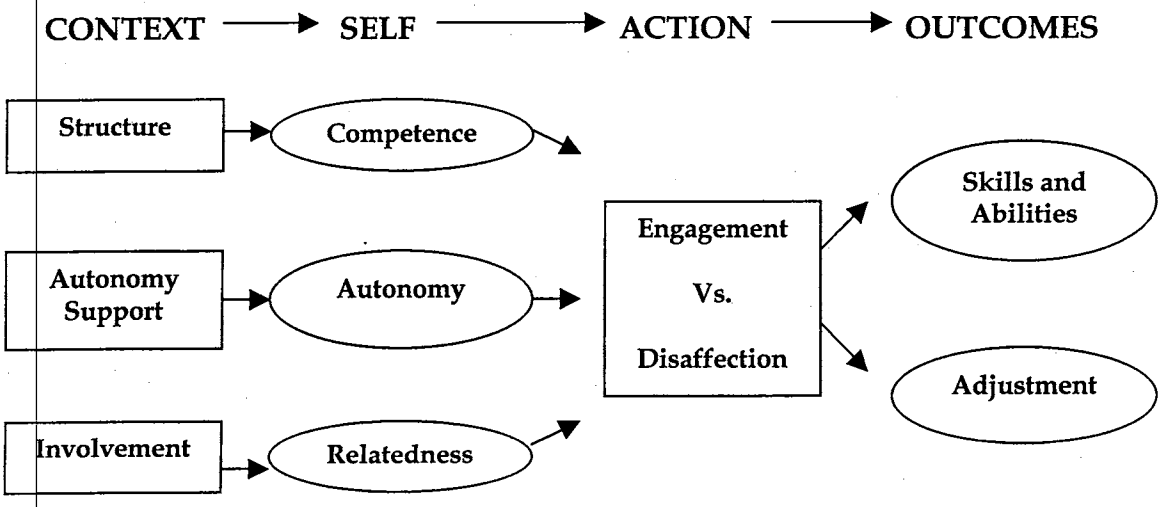

Figure 1. Connell's process model of motivation (Skinner & Wellborn, 1994).

Competence

Competence, within the framework of Connell's (1990) model of self-system processes, is defined as the experience of being able to produce specific outcomes in the sense both of achieving positive ends and avoiding negative outcomes. The postulation of competence as a psychological need derives from organismic motivation theorists' emphasis on experiencing self as effective in interactions with the environment. Effectance motivation theory (White, 1959), a reaction to drive reduction theory and psychoanalytic instinct theory (Freud, 1944), asserted that individuals derive satisfaction - a feeling of efficacy - from acting on the environment, receiving feedback, and discovering consequences of their actions. Rotter (1966) emphasized the importance of control over outcomes. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) and the learned helplessness model (Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale, 1978) both distinguish two beliefs about control: that outcomes are reliably related to behaviors, and that one is able to access the necessary behaviors. Although these theories do not address competence as a psychological need, their emphasis on competence (or control) as necessary for effective behavior assumes need.

Self-system Processes. The experience of competence relies on two internal self-system processes: perceived strategy and perceived capacity (see Figure 2; Connell, 1990). Perceived strategy is the belief that one knows how to achieve desired outcomes. In relation to school, children form beliefs about how to

achieve success in educational tasks. Five possible strategies children report for school performance are unknown ("I don't know how to do well/avoid failure in school"); powerful others ("I have to get teachers to like me to do well/avoid failure in school"); luck ("I have to be lucky to do well/avoid failure in school"); effort ("Working hard is the best way for me to do well/avoid failure in school"); and ability ("I have to be smart to do well/avoid failure in school") (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Perceived capacity is the belief that one is able to execute the strategies necessary for achieving desired outcomes. Capacity beliefs correspond to strategies (e.g., "I am/am not smart in school" corresponds to the ability strategy). A similar conceptualization (Skinner, Chapman, & Baltes, 1988) designates means-end (expectations about the extent to which certain means or causes are effective in producing positive or preventing negative outcomes) and agency beliefs (expectations about the extent to which one possesses or has access to the potential means) as components of perceived control (competence).

Social Context. The aspect of the social context associated with competence is structure. Structure refers to clearly communicated and optimally challenging expectations for and consequences of individual action, to consistent administration of these consequences, and to the provision of competence-relevant feedback. Environments characterized by chaos can threaten the need for competence. Chaotic social contexts are noncontingent, inconsistent, discriminatory, or unfair; they present situations in which information is lacking

about how to produce desired effects. This occurs when rationales for rules are not explained, tasks are too difficult, strategies for producing outcomes are not

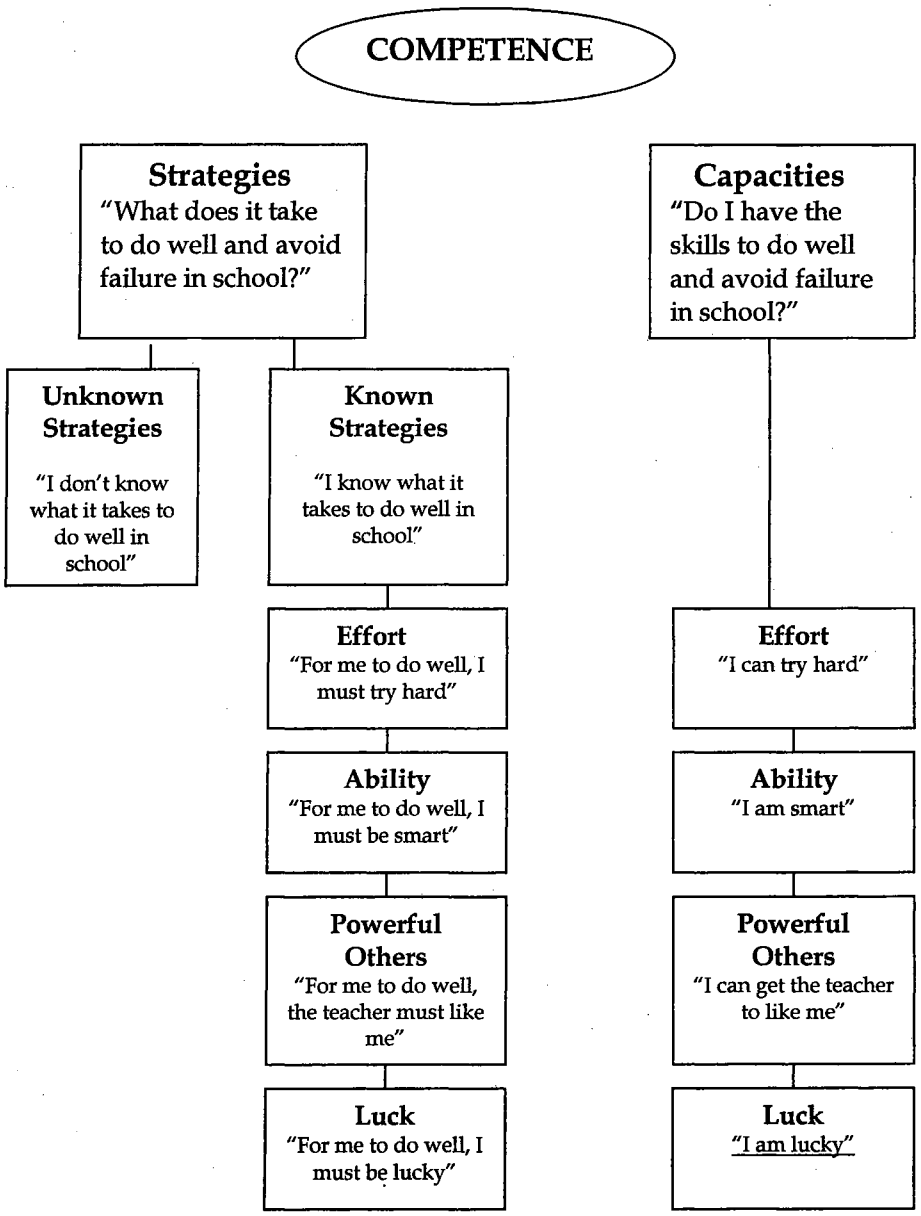

Figure 2. Self-system processes related to competence.

well-specified, practice for required tasks is not sufficient, or guidance and feedback are not provided. Children with a low sense of competence tend to

react to even mild instances of failure with confusion and panic; however, a high sense of competence allows children to cope effectively with failures and meet them with goal-directed concentration (Skinner & Wellborn, 1991).

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as "the experience of choice in the initiation, maintenance, and regulation of behavior, and the experience of connectedness between one's actions and personal goals and values" (Connell, 1990, p. 63). This aspect of self-development was recognized by Angyal (1941) who wrote, ". . . life, if our definition is correct, is a process tending toward an increase in the autonomy of the organism." Loevinger (1976), in describing the structure of human character and the sequence of development of the self, conceptualized autonomous functioning as the end goal of development - few people function autonomously a great deal of the time, but the developmental trend is toward autonomous self-regulation. Related to the concept of autonomy is deCharms' (1968) idea of personal causation and his representation of the idea as "origins" and "pawns." Based on Heider's (1958) "locus of causality," deCharms postulated that individuals are the origin of their behavior and that they struggle against "being moved about like a pawn" (p. 273). Deci and Ryan (1987) describe the concept of autonomy as self-determination - "an inner endorsement of one's actions, a sense that they are emanating from oneself" (p. 1033). Individuals who are self-determined select desired outcomes and methods of achieving them;

conversely, being controlled is the experience of *having* to do what one is doing, whether the compulsion is external or internal.

Empirical evidence suggests that autonomy is important in children's development in a number of ways. A sense of autonomy has been found to positively affect self-esteem and perceived competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985), engagement in academic settings (Wellborn, 1991), academic achievement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989), intrinsic motivation, interest-enjoyment in learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985), creativity (Amabile, 1983;), conceptual learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989), emotional tone (Boggiano, Main & Katz, 1988;), and persistence of behavior change (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Self-system Processes. The self-system processes associated with autonomy are organized under the general concept of self-regulation processes (see Figure 2.2; Connell, 1990) that involve the initiation, maintenance, and redirection of activity as well as the degree to which individuals exercise choice in regulation of the processes. Four self-regulatory styles have been identified: external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic (Ryan & Connell, 1989). External regulation is the least autonomous style. Activity that is externally regulated is initiated and maintained out of fear of negative consequences or expectation of reward. Introjected regulation also operates out of fear/expectation of consequences, but is considered a slightly more autonomous style of regulation because the pressure is internal – activity is initiated or maintained to satisfy self-esteem.

Identified regulation is autonomous in that the individual engages in activity because it leads to a goal that is considered important in its own right (e.g., learning, understanding). Intrinsic regulation is fully autonomous; activity is initiated and maintained out of interest and enjoyment.

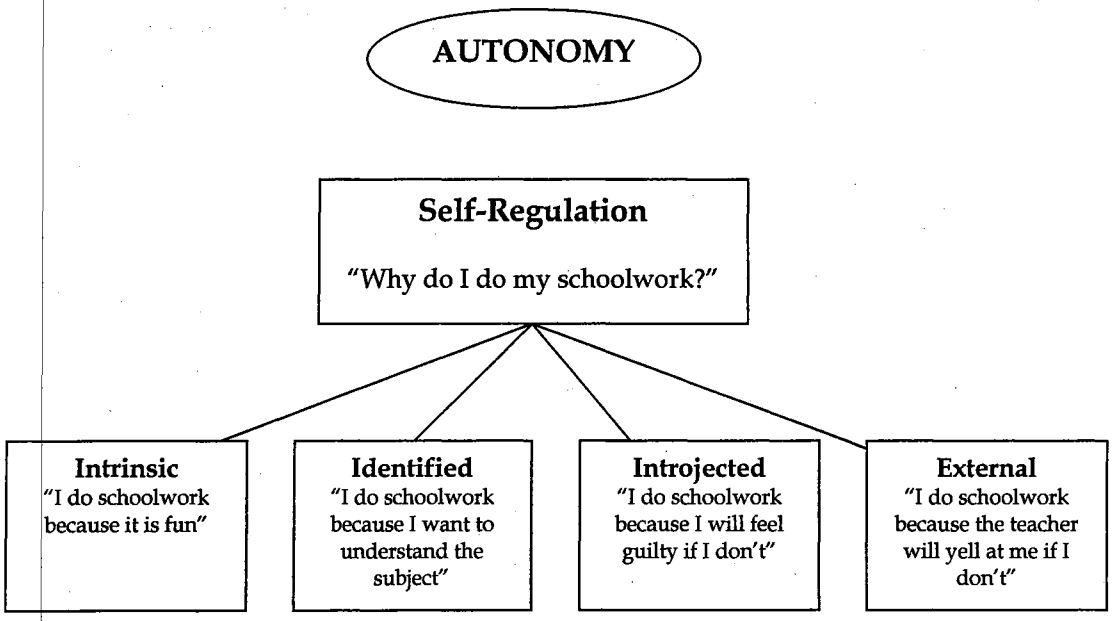

Figure 3. Self-system processes related to autonomy.

Social Context. A social context that provides autonomy support is necessary for the development of autonomy. Autonomy support refers to the communication of choice, room for initiative, recognition of feelings, and a sense that activity is connected to personal goals and values. Contexts that undermine autonomy are considered to be coercive. In a coercive context, individuals are pressured to behave in certain ways or to express certain feelings; they are pressured or forced to accept certain goals or courses of action. Children in

autonomy-supportive situations react to obstacles and setbacks with flexibility and interest and with little distress. They see obstacles as opportunities to learn. Conversely, children in coercive situations can react to even minor obstacles or resistance with high distress or frustration and may exhibit underregulated (e.g., rebellion) or overregulated (e.g., perseveration) behaviors (Skinner & Wellborn, 1997).

Relatedness

Relatedness, often referred to as belongingness or connectedness, encompasses the need to feel securely connected to the social surround and the need to experience oneself as worthy and capable of love. The latter aspect may be referred to as self-esteem. The concept of relatedness to others derives from attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1982) and object relations theory. Being alone, according to Bowlby, is one of the greatest fears of humans; the need for relatedness is part of human nature. Attachment theory asserts that even in infancy, humans' behaviors are motivated by the need for relatedness (Bowlby, 1982). An extension of Bowlby's work by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) found three patterns of attachment, in which the quality of attachment (or relatedness) to mothers determined children's willingness to explore their environment.

Studies with older children support the importance of relatedness for effective functioning. Perceived relatedness to parents and teachers can

significantly facilitate school-related functioning for adolescents (Ryan & Powelson, 1992). A positive relationship between perceived relatedness and perceived competence and autonomy has been found; a stronger sense of relatedness exists when open expression of the self is allowed.

Self-system Processes. The two self-system processes associated with relatedness are emotional quality of relationships and psychological proximity-seeking (See Figure 4; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1991). Emotional quality refers to the positive or negative emotions children have when with parents, teachers or peers, or emotions about self. Psychological proximity-seeking refers to the degree to which children wish they were psychologically closer to parents, teachers, or peers, or the way they would like to feel about self.

Social Context. Perceptions of relatedness are promoted by a social context of involvement. Involvement has to do with the communication of interest in the individual through the dedication of natural and psychological resources and with the enjoyment of the individual by those in the social context. A social context that undermines relatedness is one of neglect (Skinner & Wellborn, 1997).

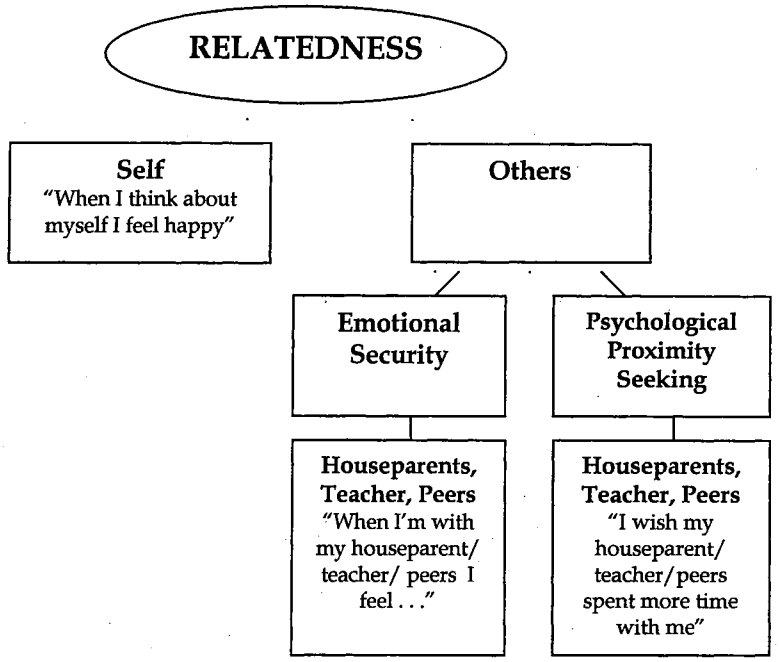

Figure 4. Self-system processes associated with relatedness.

In an environment of neglect, children are ignored or overlooked. Parents or teachers may fail to communicate regard and affection for the child, may be cold and distant or even hostile and rejecting, or may show no interest in children's work or experiences. Children who do not experience security in relationships, who doubt their own value, who view social partners as likely to be dangerous often react to even mildly stressful events with anxiety and expectations for severe social consequences. They are likely to conceal problems or avoid social contacts. Children who find security in relationships show little distress when overlooked and actively seek to reestablish contact.

Self-system Processes and Development

Two main issues regarding self-system processes and development may be addressed. The first focuses on the role of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in accomplishing developmental tasks (see Erickson, 1963) or challenges. The second focuses on the role of psychological and cognitive development in the growth of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The self-system processes of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are important across all stages of development, but they will manifest themselves in different ways according to the biological-cognitive-social growth of the child as well as the social demands at different stages (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998).

In the competence domain, Connell (1985) found that with age children become more aware of control attributions and see themselves as controlling outcomes.

Out-of-home Placements

Children's encounters with stress in their social contexts have an impact on their views of themselves and the world, which in turn have a direct influence on their motivation for behavior.

Children are in out-of-home placements for a variety of reasons. Often they have experienced long-standing abuse and/or neglect. Many come from low-income homes, have had little stability in their home, school, and peer relationships, and may be vulnerable to many physical and mental disorders due

to prenatal and postnatal environments and/or genetic influences. Others may have experienced family substance abuse, conflict, or violence. The effects of such experiences and environments on children have been extensively researched.

The effects of physical abuse are varied. Perhaps the most common finding is that physically abused children are more aggressive than nonmaltreated children (Goodman, et. al., 1998; Mueller & Silverman, 1989). In observations of both structured and unstructured play, physically abused preschool children displayed aggressiveness and avoidance when approached by other children (George & Main, 1979), and aggression in frustrating situations (Herrenkohl & Herrenkohl, 1981). Physically abused preschool children also displayed distractibilitiy, noncompliance, and low ego control, self-esteem, and creativity on tasks (Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983).

In school-age children, those who had been physically abused showed the greatest prevalence, over nonmaltreated children and those receiving other forms of maltreatment, of school suspensions and discipline referrals (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993). Additionally, the same sample of abused children performed significantly lower on standardized achievement tests and were more likely to repeat one or more grades. Another study found similar results: lower grades and math achievement scores than nonmaltreated children, and a higher incidence of dropping out of school (Leiter & Johnsen, 1994).

Psychological effects of physical abuse in 6 - 8-year-old children, compared with nonmaltreated controls, were evidenced by low levels of confidence in power to impact and shape their experiences (perceived competence) and by lack of ability to comprehend and adapt to social role expectancies (Barahal, Waterman, & Martin, 1981). A study of emotional information processing in maltreated children indicated higher reactivity to negative affects than to positive (Pollak, Cicchetti, Klorman, & Brumaghim, 1997). Finally, maltreated children showed lower perceived academic and social competence than nonmaltreated children (Barnett, Vondra, & Shonk, 1996).

Studies on the long-term effects of childhood physical abuse suggest a strong relation between the abuse and later nonfamilial and familial violence, especially for males. In females, physical abuse in childhood is associated with internalizing/emotional problems in adolescence and adulthood such as depression, suicidal and self-injurious behaviors, anxiety and psychosis (Goodman, et al., 1998).

The effects of sexual abuse are even more varied, and more difficult to assess, than those of physical abuse. No single traumatizing process or specific syndrome related to sexual abuse has been identified, although both sexualized behavior and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder occur with relatively high frequency (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). In a study of coping strategies employed by sexually abused children (Chaffin, Wherry, & Dykman, 1997), researchers found that symptoms varied depending on the

child's coping strategy. Responses to sexual abuse may be categorized as primary, secondary, or tertiary stress patterns (Hartman & Burgess, 1989). Primary stress response patterns are noted during early stages of abuse or after disclosure of abuse; they may be physical (headaches, stomachaches, appetite changes, urinary tract infections), psychological (poor concentration, depression, anxiety), behavioral (inappropriate sexual behavior, withdrawal), and/or performance related (hyperactivity, phobias, decline in school and social performance). Secondary stress response patterns typically appear some time (perhaps years) after the abuse began, often after the victim has made adaptations and developed a defensive armor. Responses may include shame, guilt, depression, fear, and avoidance. Tertiary response involves identification with the child's exploiter and is manifested in those who become molestors. Long-term effects in adults include sexual dysfunction, self-destructive behaviors, depression, low self-esteem, substance abuse, revictimization, dissociative tendencies, and feelings of isolation, anxiety, and stigmatization (Goodman, et al., 1998).

Neglected children show widespread deficits, especially in the cognitive area. In two separate studies comparing neglected children with both a general school sample and an overall sample of children receiving state welfare services, neglected children scored lower on achievement tests, received lower grades, and had more absences and grade retentions (Leiter & Johnsen, 1994; Howing, Wodarski, Kurtz, & Gaudin, 1993). Similar results were found for neglected

children compared with a nonmaltreated sample (Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996); additionally, this group had more disciplinary referrals and suspensions. Low self-esteem, poor coping skills and agency for meeting various demands, low creativity and flexibility, negative affect, and apathy/withdrawal have also been indicated (Egeland, et al., 1983). Preschool neglected children, in a play situation, were more withdrawn from social interaction than physically abused or nonmaltreated peers (Hoffman-Plotkin & Twentyman, 1984).

Analysis of the effects of poverty on children is complicated and must be viewed in relation to the effects of poverty on families and communities. Poverty has consistently been found to be a significant environment risk factor for children's academic achievement (Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchiinal, & Patterson, 1996), but children's experiences of poverty are diverse; poverty leads to a wide variety of risk factors in families, and it is the accumulation of risk factors that negatively affect children's development (Sameroff & Seifer, 1995). Children in poverty are likely to be subject to biological risks such as low birth weight and poor nutrition, low parental education, parental unemployment and depression, and inadequate parenting (Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, Liaw, & Duncan, 1995). Parents who are poor are more likely to use authoritarian styles of discipline and issue commands without explanation, less likely to consult a child about his wishes or reward positive behavior, show less expression of affection, and are less responsive to the socioemotional needs explicitly expressed by children (McLoyd, 1998).

Other stressors that affect children's development include family conflict and parental substance abuse. Parental conflict was the strongest predictor of children's emotional and behavioral problems in a study of relationships between parental interaction variables and children's adjustment (Jenkins & Smith, 1990). Children whose parents divorce show short-term effects of internalizing and externalizing problems, lower academic achievement, and poor social adjustment as compared to children from intact families (Amato & Keith, 1991); however, interparental conflict seems to have a greater impact on children than does divorce (Amato, 1993). Children of alcoholics tend to exhibit lower levels of cognitive functioning, self-esteem, and overall psychological well-being as well as poor sociability and external locus of control (Kelly & Myers, 1996). Parental alcoholism is a risk factor for the development of adult alcoholism, higher levels of externalizing and internalizing symptomatology, and low school achievement (Chassin, Barrera, & Montgomery, 1997).

Residential Care

The social contexts of children in abusive or stressful circumstances do not promote competence, autonomy and relatedness; they are chaotic, coercive, and neglectful. In 1996, child protective services agencies investigated two million reports of child maltreatment - almost one million were substantiated. Children living in harmful environments are often removed from their homes. Others living in situations of high stress, or experiencing behavior problems, may also

be placed out of the home. On any given day in the United States, more than half a million children are in the care of a government-run child care system (McKenzie, 1999). Many others are in privately operated systems.

The first orphanage in the United States opened in 1729; by 1800 there were only about five orphanages in the country (Olasky, 1999). The need for orphanages was fueled by epidemics and wars, so that by 1880 over 600 were in existence. In 1923, the number of children in orphanages peaked at 143,000. By 1920, however, sentiment toward orphanages began to turn to the negative. Critics cited the regimentation and discipline and proposed that homeless children were better off because they retained their "old, free nature" (Jones, 1893). Research citing poor outcomes for children in orphanages began to surface, and it was widely accepted that institutionalized children were doomed to failure (McCall, 1999).

One of the earliest studies of the effects of orphanage care was not a criticism. Clinical psychologists compared orphaned children to home-raised children and found comparable outcomes in the two groups - with one exception: children in orphanages showed greater gains in body weight (Trotzkey, 1930). Research in the 1940's on problems of child separation caused by war, however, focused on the devastating effects of maternal deprivation. Case studies of individual children by Freud and Burlingham (1944) and observations by Bowlby (1951) concluded that children are psychologically damaged by institutionalization despite good physical and social care. In an

eight-month follow-up comparison of infants kept in a prison nursery and infants from a foundling home, those from the prison nursery showed gains in developmental quotients while those from the foundling home showed decreases (Spitz, 1945). Clinical studies on a group of adolescents raised in a New York City orphanage indicated enduring deficiencies in speech, intellect, personality, and social development (Goldfarb, 1947). These and similar studies were widely circulated and mobilized professional opinion against institutional care. The sentiment was that orphanage experience is harmful, the damage is greatest during the first years of life, and damage increases with length of stay (McCall, 1999).

Maternal deprivation was at the heart of early arguments against orphanage care. Children's need for strong, interactive relationships with responsible adults was widely recognized, and biological parents - especially mothers - were (and are) considered the best providers of those relationships. Studies such as Spitz and Wolf's (1946) seemed to support the belief that substitute care was always detrimental. Unfortunately, most of the studies had serious methodological flaws (see Pinneau, 1955), but were given credence. Evidence to the contrary could be seen in examples of substitute maternal care in other cultures - e.g., nomadic African tribes (Kagan, 1984) and Israeli kibbutzim (Wolins, 1974) - give evidence of positive outcomes.

Studies on psychological outcomes of children in orphanage care have focused on cognitive skills (Goldfarb, 1943; Trotzkey, 1930), language skills

(Pringle and Bossio, 1960), personality (Brown, 1937; Goldfarb, 1944), and social adjustment (Bodman, McKinlay, & Sykes, 1950; Bowlby, 1944;); all indicating deficits in comparison to children raised by biological or foster parents.

This preponderance of negative findings on institutional care is valid in some instances; where there is obvious failure to provide for physical, social, or emotional needs of children, deficits are to be expected. Careful scrutiny, however, reveals several methodological flaws in much research on orphanages (McCall, 1999). Given the negative view of orphanages among professionals in the past and political divisions more recently, bias can almost certainly be expected in research procedures and interpretations. Furthermore, much of the reported research involved small, opportunistic samples and failed to report population sources adequately. Variables other than psychological damage (e.g., age at placement, gender, orphanage practice, pre-placement conditions) are largely ignored. Finally, bias against orphanages (and against studies that show no difference in comparison groups) could have led editors to publish only findings of significant differences and to suspect the reliability of studies that indicated positive outcomes in institutions.

Some recent studies have sought to correct methodological problems of past orphanage research as well as provide a more representative view of life within residential facilities and long-term outcomes of former residents. A longitudinal comparison of adolescents in a residential care facility and youths who were referred but chose community services over residential care, focused on long-

term academic outcomes and on youths' perceptions of help and relationships provided and sense of control (Friman, et al., 1996; Thompson, et al., 1996). Residents showed greater gains in academic performance and attitudes toward school and maintained the differences after leaving care (Thompson, et al., 1996). In the comparison of perceptions of help, relationships, and sense of control, residents reported significantly more positive experiences than the comparison group (Friman, et al., 1996).

In a survey of 1,600 former orphanage residents (McKenzie, 1999), long-term outcomes were overwhelmingly positive. Educational attainment and median outcomes were significantly higher than age and race counterparts. Unemployment rate was one percent - one-fourth of the rate for age/race counterparts; however, the divorce rate of former residents was slightly higher. When asked about their experiences of residential care, 76% reported an overall "very favorable" rating. Preference for orphanage care over their own families was chosen by 72%; preference for orphanage care over foster care was chosen by 92%. A higher percentage of former residents cited positive attributes of orphanage care than cited negative attributes. Positive attributes included personal values and direction, sense of self-worth and belonging, basic amenities, education and guidance. Negative attributes were separation from families, lack of love and emotional support from staff, lack of education, lack of freedom, and excessive punishment and work demands.

One previously mentioned criticism of out-of-home placement concerns length of stay, and claims a negative relationship between children's successful outcomes and length of stay (Goldfarb, 1947). More recent research has shown the opposite—greater gains by children in long-term (over short-term) foster care in IQ, school achievement, and behavior (Fanshel & Shinn, 1978), and longer retention of gains made in institutional care by children with longer stays (Thompson, et al., 1996).

As has been shown, residential care facilities for disadvantaged children have received much criticism. Some of the criticisms have been valid. Not all facilities are good; neither are they all bad. Many group care facilities provide safe and effective environments for children who can no longer live at home. These facilities provide adequate training and support for caregivers, have a well-defined model of care, focus on and develop positive behaviors in children, are consumer oriented, and build accountability and evaluation into their programs (Daly & Dowd, 1992). Likewise, an environment that provides healing for the harm children may have experienced depends heavily on caregivers. In safe, effective placements, child care workers show flexibility, empathy, support, acceptance, patience, openmindedness, self-control, and honesty (Shealy, 1995).

Of course, residential care is not appropriate for children who have a loving parent capable of caring for them. But many children live in circumstances in which love and care are not available. Out-of-home placements are not the ideal for raising children, but " . . . home removal is always preferable to an abusive,

neglectful, or emotionally damaging environment that is unsafe or cannot be sufficiently modified with skillful intervention (Shealy, 1994).

Assessment of Self-system Processes

The constructs in Connell's process model of motivation derive from rich theoretical backgrounds and reliable, valid instruments for their measurement have been developed.

Scales to measure competence include The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC; Harter, 1982), A New Multidimensional Measure of Children's Perceptions of Control (MMPC; Connell, 1985), and Student Perceptions of Control Questionnaire (SPOCQ; Wellborn, Connell, & Skinner, 1989). The PCSC was designed to minimize socially desirable responses and to assess competence in three domains: cognitive, social, and physical. The MMPC followed Harter's (1982) work in domain-specific assessment in which competence was measured in the areas of cognitive, social and physical abilities, but added a developmental dimension and used items constructed from interviews with children (Connell, 1985). Based on Connell's (1990) process model, the SPOCQ measures self-system processes associated with competence (Wellborn, et al., 1989).

In the autonomy domain are deCharms' (1976) Origin Climate Questionnaire and Connell & Ryan's (1984) Self-Regulatory Style Questionnaire (SRQ). The Origin Climate Questionnaire measures the degree to which children perceive the classroom environment as allowing them to be "origins" (originating their

own behavior) rather than "pawns" (acting as a result of extrinsic forces) (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). The SRQ measures children's perceived autonomy in performing activities in a given social context; scales distinguish four styles of self-regulation (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

Relatedness to others has been studied mainly as attachment, and research has focused on young children. The reason for this, at least in part, "is due to the paucity of measures of attachment" in middle childhood and adolescence (Toth & Cicchetti, 1996). Relatedness to self, similar to self-esteem, has been widely researched and many measures exist. The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982), for example, contains a section that assesses general feelings of self-worth. The Research Assessment Package for Schools—Student Report (RAPS-S; Wellborn & Connell, 1987) was developed to assess the constructs in Connell's process model of motivation in relation to academic settings. The scales measuring competence and autonomy were derived from the previous work of Connell (1985) and Ryan and Connell (1989). The scale measuring relatedness was derived partially from Harter (1982) and from interview with children (Connell, 1985). While many instruments may be used to assess the constructs in Connell's model, the RAPS-S provides a concise and accurate measure of each construct within a single instrument.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of competence, autonomy and relatedness of children in a residential child care facility and to examine the relationship of perceptions to gender, age, and length of stay in the facility. This chapter describes subjects, setting, design, instruments, and procedures and data analysis for the study.

Subjects

Subjects for the study included 110 children residing with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC). Children's ages ranged from 9 to 19 years with a mean age of 14. The sample included 48 males (44%) and 62 females (56%). Ethnicity among subjects was recorded as 18 African-American (16%), 78 Caucasian (71%), 5 Hispanic (5%), and 9 Native American (8%). Records revealed that 33 children (30%) had no previous out-of-home placements, while 33 (30%) had one previous placement and 44 (40%) had two or more previous placements. Special education services were provided in public schools for 28 (25%) of children (learning disabilities, 24; emotional disturbance, 1; mental retardation, 3). Length of stay ranged from one week to 94 months, with 58% having a length of stay 12 months or less and 77% having a length of stay 24 months or less. Records indicated some form of abuse for 71 (65%) of residents.

Demographic information is provided in Table 1 and includes, in addition to the above-mentioned factors, organization of the family setting from which children were placed with OBHC (traditional two-biological-parent, single parent, other), and drug use by child or family member.

Selection of subjects for participation in the study involved a review of the individual files of all residents who completed the Research Assessment Package for Schools - Student Form in an independent evaluation contracted by OBHC. Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children granted permission for access to residents' files with the understanding that no identifying information would be recorded (Appendix A). The Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University reviewed the proposed file review and granted approval (Appendix B).

Setting

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) began in March, 1903, as Oklahoma Baptist Orphans' Home in Oklahoma Station (renamed Oklahoma City in 1923) when three abandoned girls were taken in by a pastor and his wife. By October, 1903, fifteen children resided in the Home, which had received its charter in September of that year. In 1953, land and funds for a home for boys in Edmond were donated in memory of a boy who had died at age 14. Baptist child care expanded to the Tulsa area in 1973 when land was donated for a children's

Table 1

Demographic Information for Subjects

Category	Total		Boys		Girls	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Gender	110	100	48	44	62	56
Age						
9	3	3	0	0	3	3
10-12	27	25	16	15	11	10
13-15	46	42	17	15	29	26
16-19	34	31	15	14	19	17
Drug Use						
None	44	40	20	18	24	22
Child	4	4	1	1	3	3
Family	62	56	27	25	35	32
Ethnicity						
African-American	18	16	11	10	7	6
Caucasian	78	71	32	29	46	42
Hispanic	5	5	2	2	3	3
Native American	9	8	3	3	6	5
Family Organization						
Traditional	11	10	5	5	6	5
Single Parent	50	45	26	24	24	22
Other	49	45	17	15	32	29

Abuse						
None	39	36	18	16	21	19
Physical	30	27	16	15	14	13
Sexual	16	14	5	5	11	10
Multiple	25	23	9	8	16	15
Previous Placement						
None	33	30	12	11	21	19
1	33	30	10	9	23	21
2	24	22	14	13	10	9
3+	20	18	12	11	8	7
Special Education						
None	82	74	33	30	49	45
LD	24	22	13	12	11	10
ED	1	1	1	1	0	0
MR	3	3	1	1	2	2
Length of Stay						
0-6 months	39	35	20	18	19	17
7-12 months	25	23	9	8	16	15
13-24 months	21	19	10	9	11	10
25+ months	25	23	9	8	16	15

Drug Use: Child = Drug use by child; Family = Drug use by immediate family member. Family Organization (from which child was placed with OBHC): Traditional = Biological mother and father; Other = Biological parent and stepparent, living with relatives, or DHS custody. Abuse: Multiple = Both physical and sexual abuse. Special Education: LD = learning disability; ED = emotional disturbance; MR = mental retardation.

home in Owasso. Finally, in 1977, former Oklahoma Governor Raymond Gary donated land for a fourth children's home in Madill (Gaskin, 1978).

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children continues to operate four children's home campuses. Children reside in cottages with a houseparent couple. Cottages house up to eight children; Owasso and Madill campuses have four cottages, Oklahoma City and Edmond campuses have six. The campuses at Edmond and Madill exclusively house boys and girls, respectively. Oklahoma City and Owasso campuses are coeducational. Programs at the four campuses are similar, with the main difference being in extracurricular activities (the Edmond campus is a working ranch and Madill has a heavy emphasis on vocational agriculture). Placement in the homes is by parental agreement, contract with Oklahoma Department of Human Services under a "no-pay contract" (no state money received by OBHC), or legal custody.

Upon placement, a Plan of Care is developed for each child. This document is developed collaboratively by the child, child's family and OBHC social worker and houseparents. The Plan of Care contains goals in the areas of education, religion and morality, behavior, vocation/recreation, counseling, and peer relations. The Plan of Care outlines family visitation plans and financial responsibilities of the family. Family conferences are held twice a year to evaluate the Plan of Care.

Children attend public schools in the local community and participate in various academic and extra-curricular programs in the school system (OBHC Information Manual, 1989).

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children is licensed by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) under the Child Care Facilities Licensing Act of 1963. Its practice is guided, in part, by the Requirements for Residential Child Care Facilities (Oklahoma Department of Human Services,1990), and is monitored through on-site inspections and consultation by DHS licensing agents. Training for houseparents, social work staff, and administrators is provided according to state requirements. OBHC staff receives certification through Oklahoma Association for Children's Institutions and Agencies, Inc. Initial certification requires 33 hours of training in child development, behavior management, and residential management provided by a certified trainer. Recertification is required every three years and involves 72 classroom training hours over the three-year period and current American Red Cross Standard First Aid certification (Oklahoma Association for Children's Institutions and Agencies, Policies and Procedures for Certification of Child Care Workers and Child Care Trainers, 1998).

Measures

Demographic information and responses to the measurement instrument were obtained by reviewing resident files at each campus operated by OBHC

and recording on a record review form (Appendix C). The measurement instrument for the study, in addition to demographics, was the Research Assessment Package for Schools - Student Report (RAPS-S; Wellborn & Connell, 1987).

The RAPS-S was developed to assess the constructs in Connell's (1990) process model of motivation. Constructs were assessed under three domains. One domain was Beliefs About Self, with scales measuring perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. A second domain was Experiences of Personal Support, with scales measuring perceptions of provision of structure (relating to competence), autonomy support (relating to autonomy), and involvement (relating to relatedness) provided by their social contexts (home and school). The third domain, Engagement, measured engagement in school. For this study only the Beliefs About Self domain was considered. (See Appendix D for RAPS-S items in the Beliefs About Self domain, arranged by subscale.)

All items were answered on a four-point likert scale from "Very True" (A) to "Not at all True" (D). Descriptions of RAPS-S scales and subscales utilized in this study, as well as reported reliability and validity data (Wellborn & Connell, 1987), are discussed below. Alpha reliability coefficients for internal consistency were reported as a range between elementary and middle school students.

Under the domain of Beliefs About Self, the Perceived Competence scale contained 20 items measuring children's Perceptions of Control ("I can do well in school if I want to"), Strategies ("Trying hard is the best way for me to do well in

school"), and Capacity ("I can work really hard in school"). Scoring for the Perceived Competence scale involves mathematical computations which yield scores for Promotes Competence (α = .40-.57) and Undermines Competence (α = .77-.78).

The Competence scale was taken from the Student Perceptions of Control Questionnaire (SPOCQ; Wellborn, Connell, & Skinner, 1989).

The second scale in the Beliefs About Self domain was Perceived Autonomy, comprised of 17 items measuring four scales. Children rated each set of items as answers to questions about why they perform school activities. The scales differed on the extent to which reasons for task involvement were autonomous: External Self-Regulation ("Why do I do my homework? Because I'll get in trouble if I don't;" α=.65-.69), Introjected Self-Regulation ("Why do I do my homework? Because I'll be embarrassed if I don't;" α=.77-.78), Identified Self-Regulation ("Why do I do my homework? Because I want to understand the subject;" α=.78-.83), and Intrinsic Self-Regulation ("Why do I do my homework? Because I like to do it;" α=.80-.84).

Scales measuring perceived autonomy were taken from the Self-Regulatory Style Questionnaire (SRQ, Ryan & Connell, 1989). The four scales "have been shown to be factorially distinct and valid as indicators of the amount of autonomy with which school activities are carried out" (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The Relatedness scale, third in the psychological needs domain, included 32 items in 8 subscales which assessed Emotional Security with Self ("When I think

about myself, I feel happy;" α=.78-.80), Satisfaction with Self ("I wish I felt better about myself;" α =.55-.67), Parental Emotional Security ("When I'm with my parents, I feel good;" α=.78-.82), Parental Psychological Proximity Seeking ("I wish I could talk about more things with my parents;" α=.75-.76), Teacher Emotional Security ("When I'm with my teacher, I feel ignored;" α=.75-.77), Teacher Psychological Proximity Seeking ("I with my teacher knew me better;" α=.63-.67), Peer Emotional Security ("When I'm with my classmates, I feel unhappy;" α=.76-.83), and Peer Psychological Proximity Seeking (I wish my classmates would spend more time with me;" α=.56-.59). For this study, "parents" was changed to "houseparents" in order to assess OBHC residents' relationships with houseparents and to avoid confusion in answering items.

In prior normative data, relatedness scales have been found to form patterns consistent with attachment theory (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1991).

Procedures

Data collection for this study involved a review of individual files of residents of OBHC. Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children had previously contracted with the researcher to administer the Research Assessment Package for Students - Student Form in order to aid evaluation of children's performance in school (see Appendix A). The RAPS-S had been administered to small groups of children (eight or less) in their respective cottages.

Selected RAPS-S scores and demographic information were gathered from confidential files and recorded on the Record Review Form (Appendix C). No identifying information was recorded.

Two additional notes regarding administration of the RAPS-S with the sample should be made: First, subjects' responses to filling out the questionnaire were largely negative. This may have been due to length of questionnaire (150 questions) and repetitiveness of questions, and may have caused subjects to give rushed responses. Younger subjects asked for clarification on several items, leading the researcher to believe they did not fully understand the items or the instructions. Second, group administration of the RAPS-S may have contributed to both socially desirable response sets and the overall negative attitude toward completing questionnaires.

Design and Data Analysis

This study was designed to obtain a description of the perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness among children in a residential child care facility, to determine the effects of age and length of stay in the facility on such perceptions, and to describe any difference in perceptions based on gender. The goal was to enhance understanding of children in residential care and of their educational needs. Analysis was designed to be correlational in nature.

In order to test the specific reliability of the RAPS-S for this sample, a factor analysis was conducted on scores from selected scales of the RAPS-S. Resulting

factors were similar to those in the original scales; therefore, analysis was completed as recommended by the authors (Wellborn & Connell, 1987).

A predictor-selection method (forward selection) of multiple regression was utilized to determine relationships between children's Beliefs About Self and age and length of stay in the residential care facility. Analyses were conducted separately by gender, then one-way analyses of variance were employed to determine any differences between males and females.

Predictor selection methods in multiple regression yield a higher probability of Type I errors because multiple tests of significance are conducted in choosing predictor variables. Additionally, no allowance is made for studying the effect the introduction of new predictors may have on the usefulness of predictors already in the regression equation. Consequently, interpretation of regression equations should be made cautiously, and predictor selection methods should be limited to the case of prediction (Pedhazur, 1997). In light of this caution, close examination of correlations in the study is advised, and may be indicated for further research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of competence, autonomy and relatedness of children in a residential child care facility and to examine the relationship of perceptions to gender, age, and length of stay in the facility. Records of 110 children residing with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) were reviewed to gather data on demographics and results of a previous administration of the Research Assessment Package for Schools – Student Report (RAPS-S; Connell & Wellborn, 1987). Results of statistical analyses and answers to research questions are reported in this chapter.

Analyses were conducted using multiple regression to show linear relationships among variables. Variables included age and length of stay of children residing with OBHC and subscale scores from three RAPS-S scales: From the Competence scale, Promotes Competence (PROMO) and Undermines Competence (UNDER) subscales were analyzed; from the Autonomy scale, External, Introjected, Identified, and Intrinsic subscales were analyzed; and from the Relatedness scale, Relatedness to Self, Self-Satisfaction, Houseparent Emotional Security, Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Teacher Emotional Security, Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Peer Emotional Security, and Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking subscales were analyzed. Children whose records were reviewed ranged in age from nine to nineteen

years. Length of stay in OBHC ranged from zero to ninety-four months. Sample description is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Description of Sample by Age and Length of Stay

	N	Age Range (Years)	Mean Age	Length of Stay Range (Months)	Mean Length of Stay
Boys	48	10 - 18	13.83	1 - 94	17.81
Girls	62	9 - 19	14.16	0 - 94	17.35
Total	110	9 - 19	14.01	0 - 94	17.55

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations for the scales from the RAPS-S used in the analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Data is presented separately for all boys and girls (Table 3) because analyses were conducted separately to allow for comparison of results by gender. Data for boys and girls by individual campus is presented (Table 4) to allow comparison by campus. Scores for the Competence scales were derived through mathematical computation according to formulas for weighting items (Connell & Wellborn, 1987). Scores for Promotes Competence (PROMO) ranged from 24 to 80 for boys and from 33 to 74 for girls; for Undermines Competence (UNDER), scores ranged from 14 to 58 for boys and from 14 to 74 for girls. Scores for the Autonomy and Relatedness subscales were

derived by computing means. Means ranged from 2.2 to 3.3 on Autonomy and Relatedness subscales.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated to measure internal consistency of all subscales for this sample. Reliability coefficients for this sample are reported in Table 5. Reliabilities ranged from $\alpha = .49$ for the Promotes Competence subscale to $\alpha = .91$ for the Intrinsic Self-Regulation subscale (Autonomy scale).

Statistical Analysis

In order to test hypotheses related to research questions, multiple regression analyses of scale predictors on criterion of age and length of stay were conducted separately for boys and girls. Forward selection method was used to select the minimum number of variables necessary to account for as much of the variance in criterion as possible. An important consideration in multiple regression is the intercorrelation of variables; therefore, Pearson product- moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength of relationships among variables in this study. Significant correlation coefficients are presented separately for boys and girls in Table 6.

Several patterns of correlations were of particular interest. First, while significant correlations were found among age and length of stay and various subscales for boys, there were no significant correlations among age, length of stay, and subscales for girls. Second, the pattern of correlations between self-esteem subscales and subscales measuring emotional security and psychological

proximity-seeking with houseparents, teachers, and peers were the same for boys and girls. Positive correlations were found between Relatedness to Self and Houseparent/Teacher/Peer Emotional Security; negative correlations were found between Self-Satisfaction and Houseparent/Teacher/Peer Psychological Proximity Seeking. Third, consistent with the literature, self-esteem subscales indicated a positive relationship to age for boys, but not for girls.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of RAPS-S Scales

	Boys (n=48)		Girls (n=62)		Total (N=110)	
Scales	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Competence Scales:						
PROMO	58.21	12.99	58.01	10.81	58.10	11.75
UNDER	23.70	11.63	31.65	15.61	28.18	14.51
Autonomy Scales:						
EXTERNAL	2.81	.96	2.90	.92	2.86	.95
INTROJECTED	2.32	.89	2.64	.89	2.50	.90
IDENTIFIED	3.26	.86	3.29	.74	3.28	.74
INTRINSIC	2.50	1.02	2.49	.97	2.50	.99
Relatedness Scales:						
RELSELF	3.34	.78	2.91	.76	3.09	.80
SELFSAT	2.27	1.01	2.89	.91	2.62	.99
HES	3.14	.81	3.10	.78	3.11	.79
HPPS	2.64	.65	3.07	.68	2.88	.70
TES	3.16	.73	3.16	.68	3.16	.70
TPPS	2.19	.95	2.49	.86	2.36	.91
PES	3.42	.83	3.18	.82	3.28	.83
PPPS	2.38	1.03	2.54	1.01	2.47	1.05

PROMO = Promotes Competence; UNDER = Undermines Competence; RELSELF = Relatedness to Self; SELFSAT = Self-Satisfaction; HES = Houseparent Emotional Security; HPPS = Houseparent Psychological Proximity Seeking; TES = Teacher Emotional Security; TPPS = Teacher Psychological Proximity Seeking; PES = Peer Emotional Security; PPPS = Peer Psychological Proximity Seeking.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of RAPS-S Scales for Boys and Girls by Campus

Scales	OKC Boys (N=4)		OKC Girls (N=25)		Owasso Boys (N=6)		Owasso Girls (N=15)		Madill Boys (N=2)		Madill Girls (N=22)		BRT Boys (N=36)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Competence:														
PROMO	59.50	12.39	57.04	11.15	58.75	17.60	56.86	12.95	67.50	12.02	59.89	8.93	57.46	12.62
UNDER	21.25	9.67	30.50	14.07	26.00	14.70	33.37	16.17	14.75	1.06	31.80	17.42	24.08	11.69
Autonomy:														
INTRINSIC	2.69	1.34	2.15	1.02	2.70	.66	2.73	.99	3.75	.35	2.72	.82	2.38	1.03
IDENTIFIED	3.25	1.50	3.34	.55	3.33	.46	3.25	.77	4.00	0.00	3.26	.64	3.21	.86
INTROJECTED	2.38	1.2	2.62	.96	2.88	.77	2.65	.87	2.75	.35	2.65	.86	2.20	.87
EXTERNAL	3.31	.75	2.90	.93	2.83	.86	3.17	.67	3.75	0.00	2.72	1.03	2.69	.99
Relatedness:														
RELSELF	5.75	.30	3.03	.74	3.30	.71	2.63	.88	4.00	0.00	2.95	.68	3.26	.82
SELFSAT	2.50	1.23	2.88	.90	2.17	.69	3.02	.83	3.00	1.41	2.80	.98	2.22	1.03
HES	2.75	.57	3.07	.80	3.33	.76	2.91	.84	3.80	.28	3.25	.70	3.11	.85
HPPS	2.63	.60	3.16	.59	2.58	.47	2.87	.67	3.38	.18	3.10	.78	2.61	.69
TES	3.50	.60	3.18	.64	3.13	.77	3.29	.70	4.00	0.00	3.05	.73	3.08	.74
TPPS	2.67	.94	2.51	.89	2.06	.68	2.31	.70	2.83	.24	2.61	.95	2.13	1.01
PES	4.00	0.00	3.05	.94	3.63	.43	3.43	.63	4.00	0.00	3.16	.79	3.28	.90
PPPS	3.50	1.00	2.68	.90	2.25	.94	2.53	1.16	4.00	0.00	2.39	1.06	2.18	1.04

PROMO=Promotes Competence; UNDER=Undermines Competence; RELSELF=Relatedness to Self; SELFSAT=Self Satisfaction; HES=Houseparent Emotional Security; HPPS= Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking; TES=Teacher Emotional Security; TPPS=Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking; PES=Peer Emotional Security; PPPS=Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking.

Table 5

Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for RAPS-S Subscales

Scale	Subscale	Alpha Coefficients
Competence	Promotes Competence	.49
	Undermines Competence	.86
Autonomy	External Self-Regulation	.81
	Introjected Self-Regulation	.81
	Identified Self-Regulation	.89
	Intrinsic Self-Regulation	.91
Relatedness	Relatedness to Self	.88
	Self-Satisfaction	.70
	Houseparent Emotional Security	.88
	Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking	.80
	Teacher Emotional Security	.83
	Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking	.75
	Peer Emotional Security	.90
	Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking	.70

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between All Variables for Boys and Girls

	Age	Stay	Promo	Under.	Extern.	Introj.	Ident.	Intrin.	Relself	Selfsat	HES	HPPS	TES	TPPS	PES	PPPS
Age	**1.00**	.539**	.339*	-.307*	--	--	--	--	.309*	-.310*	--	--	--	--	--	--
Stay	--	**1.00**	--	--	--	--	--	--	.332*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Promo	--	--	**1.00**	-.600**	--	--	.490**	--	.525**	-.354*	.527**	--	.564**	--	.568**	--
Under	--	--	-.683**	**1.00**	--	--	--	--	-.525**	.416**	-.313*	--	-.366*	--	-.419*	--
Extern	--	--	--	--	**1.00**	--	--	--	--	.321*	--	--	--	--	.293*	--
Introj	--	--	--	.267*	.560**	**1.00**	.418**	.356*	--	--	--	.292*	--	--	--	.349*
Ident	--	--	-.287*	--	--	.322*	**1.00**	.624**	--	--	.376**	--	.647**	--	.287*	--
Intrin	--	--	.284*	--	--	--	.625**	**1.00**	.317*	--	.331*	--	--	--	--	--
Relself	--	--	--	-.292	--	--	--	--	**1.00**	-.450**	.512**	--	.423**	--	.530**	--
Selfsat	--	--	-.275	.457**	.314*	.331**	--	--	-.577**	**1.00**	-.333*	--	--	.330*	--	.344*
HES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.343**	-.325**	**1.00**	--	.437**	--	.676**	--
HPPS	--	--	--	--	--	--	.460**	--	--	.390**	--	**1.00**	.307*	.373**	--	.498**
TES	--	--	--	-.403**	-.260*	-.403**	--	--	.281*	-.348**	--	--	**1.00**	.343*	.492**	--
TPPS	--	--	--	.395**	--	-.260*	--	--	--	.494**	--	.436**	-.350**	**1.00**	--	.646**
PES	--	--	.363**	-.254*	--	-.303*	--	--	.439**	-.303*	--	--	.475**	-.290*	**1.00**	--
PPPS	--	--	--	.369**	--	--	--	--	-.289*	.479**	-.318*	--	-.319*	.504**	-.279*	**1.00**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level *Correlation is significant at the .05 level
Correlations for boys appear above the diagonal; correlations for girls appear below the diagonal.
Dash (--) indicates nonsignificant correlation.

Research Question #1

Among boys living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for boys in a residential child care facility.

In order to test Null Hypothesis 1, a regression equation was obtained by regressing the fourteen subscales measuring perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness on the age criterion. The equation indicated existence of a relationship between a linear combination of selected predictor variables and age. Five predictor variables were selected to account for boys' variance by age: Promotes Competence (PROMO), Self-Satisfaction, Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking, and Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking (see Table 7). The regression equation was significant ($p < .05$), but accounted for only 23% of the variance in age for boys. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Summary Table for Scale Predictors and Age Criterion for Boys

Step/Variables Entered	R	R-Square	R-Square Change	Change F Sig.	Overall Equation F	Overall Equation F Sig.
1. PROMO	.339	.115	.115	.018	5.987	.018
2. SELFSAT	.396	.157	.041	.144	4.175	.022
3. HPPS	.418	.175	.018	.332	3.101	.036
4. PPPS	.436	.190	.016	.368	2.523	.055
5. TPPS	.476	.226	.036	.168	2.457	.049

PROMO = Promotes Competence; SELFSAT = Self-Satisfaction; HPPS = Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking; PPPS = Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking; TPPS = Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking

Research Question #2

Among girls living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between age and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for girls in a residential child care facility.

In order to test Null Hypothesis 2, a regression equation was obtained by regressing the fourteen subscale scores for competence, autonomy, and relatedness on age for girls. The equation indicated existence of a relationship between a linear combination of selected predictor variables and age. Nine predictor variables were selected to account for girls' variance by age: Intrinsic Self-Regulation, Identified Self-Regulation, Teacher Emotional Security, Self-Satisfaction, Undermines Competence, Promotes Competence, Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking, and Relatedness to Self (see Table 8). The equation was significant ($p < .05$), and accounted for approximately 28% of the variance in age. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Summary Table for Scale Predictors and Age Criterion for Girls

Step/Variable Entered	R	R-Square	R-Square Change	Change F Sig.	Overall Equation F	Overall Equation F Sig.
1. INTRINSIC	.229	.052	.052	.073	3.320	.073
2. IDENT.	.306	.094	.041	.106	3.053	.055
3. TES	.348	.121	.027	.187	2.656	.057
4. SELFSAT	.418	.175	.054	.059	3.015	.025
5. UNDER	.438	.192	.017	.284	2.654	.032
6. PROMO	.502	.252	.060	.040	3.087	.011
7. PPPS	.512	.263	.011	.383	2.746	.016
8. TPPS	.523	.274	.011	.370	2.497	.022
9. RELSELF	.527	.277	.004	.615	2.217	.035

INTRINSIC = Intrinsic Self-Regulation; IDENT. = Identified Self-Regulation; TES = Teacher Emotional Security; SELFSAT = Self-Satisfaction; UNDER = Undermines Competence; PROMO = Promotes Competence; PPPS = Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking; TPPS = Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking; RELSELF = Relatedness to Self.

Research Question #3

Among boys living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for boys in a residential care facility.

In order to test Null Hypothesis 3, a regression equation was obtained by regressing the fourteen subscale scores for competence, autonomy, and relatedness on length of stay for boys. The equation indicated existence of a relationship between a linear combination of selected predictor variables and length of stay. Six predictor variables were selected to account for boys' variance by length of stay: Relatedness to Self, Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking, External Self-Regulation, Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking, and Undermines Competence. The equation was significant ($p < .05$), and accounted for approximately 27% of the variance in age. Table 9 provides a summary. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Summary Table for Scale Predictors and Length of Stay Criterion for Boys

Step/Variables Entered	R	R-Square	R-Square Change	Change F Sig.	Overall Equation F	Overall Equation F Sig.
1. RELSELF	.332	.110	.110	.021	5.684	.021
2. PPPS	.403	.163	.053	.099	4.375	.018
3. HPPS	.445	.198	.036	.169	3.631	.020
4. EXTERNAL	.470	.221	.022	.276	3.041	.027
5. TPPS	.497	.247	.026	.233	2.752	.031
6. UNDER	.516	.266	.020	.302	2.480	.039

RELSELF = Relatedness to Self; PPPS = Peer Psychological Proximity-Seeking; HPPS = Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking; EXTERNAL = External Self-Regulation; TPPS = Teacher Psychological Proximity-Seeking; UNDER = Undermines Competence

Research Question #4

Among girls living in a residential child care facility, what is the relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for girls in a residential child care facility.

In order to test Null Hypothesis 4, a regression equation was obtained by regressing all fourteen subscales on length of stay for girls. The regression equation with all variables entered accounted for only 9% of the variance in length of stay. No significant relationship was found, suggesting there was no linear relationship of the competence, autonomy, and relatedness variables to length of stay for girls. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Research Question #5

Among children in a residential child care facility, what is the difference between boys' and girls' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness?

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no difference between boys' and girls' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

In order to test Null Hypothesis 5, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted comparing mean differences for boys and girls across the fourteen subscales of the RAPS-S competence, autonomy, and relatedness scales (Table 10). Significant differences ($p < .01$) were found for four subscales: Self Satisfaction, Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking, Undermines Competence, and Relatedness to Self. Specifically, girls' scores were significantly higher for Undermines Competence, Self Satisfaction, and Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking subscales, while boys scored significantly higher on the Relatedness to Self subscale (see Table 3).

These findings indicate that among children in this residential child care facility there is a difference between perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness according to gender. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 10

One-way ANOVA of Mean Differences for Boys and Girls on RAPS-S Subscales

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PROMO	B	1.085	1	1.085	.008	.930
	W	15049.663	108	139.349		
	T	15050.748	109			
UNDER	B	1712.199	1	1712.199	8.713	.004
	W	21223.164	108	196.511		
	T	22935.364	109			
External	B	.229	1	.229	.262	.610
	W	94.212	108	.872		
	T	94.441	109			
Identified	B	.02769	1	.02769	.051	.822
	W	59.091	108	.547		
	T	59.119	109			
Intrinsic	B	.004766	1	.004766	.005	.945
	W	106.557	108	.987		
	T	106.562	109			
Introjected	B	2.671	1	2.671	3.390	.068
	W	85.079	108	.788		
	T	87.750	109			
RelSelf	B	5.027	1	5.027	8.495	.004
	W	63.910	108	.592		
	T	68.937	109			
SelfSat	B	10.275	1	10.275	11.385	.001
	W	97.467	108	.902		
	T	107.741	109			
HES	B	.04487	1	.04487	.072	.790
	W	67.672	108	.627		
	T	67.717	109			
HPPS	B	4.954	1	4.954	11.087	.001
	W	48.259	108	.447		
	T	53.214	109			
TES	B	.0002366	1	.0002366	.000	.983
	W	53.344	108	.494		
	T	53.344	109			
TPPS	B	2.438	1	2.438	2.995	.086
	W	87.906	108	.814		
	T	90.343	109			
PES	B	1.507	1	1.507	2.220	.139
	W	73.323	108	.679		
	T	74.831	109			
PPPS	B	.739	1	.739	.666	.416
	W	119.899	108	1.110		
	T	120.639	109			

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to examine the relationships between self-system processes and children's gender, age, and length of stay in a residential child care facility. A summary of major findings with discussion of results, limitations, conclusions of the study and recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter.

Summary

Self-system processes of 110 children residing with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) were measured using the Research Assessment Package for Schools - Student Report (Wellborn & Connell, 1987). Five research questions were addressed in the study. Relationships between age and length of stay in a residential child care facility and components of self-system processes were examined for boys and girls separately through the use of multiple regression analysis. Analysis of variance was used to determine relationships between responses of boys and girls.

Finding #1

The first question of interest for this study involved the relationship between boys' ages and their perceptions of personal competence, autonomy and

relatedness. Regression analysis indicated that, for boys, there was a relationship between age and beliefs that promote feelings of competence, self-esteem, and seeking closeness to houseparents, peers, and teachers.

Examination of correlations between age and these variables suggests that as boys' ages increase, they seek less closeness with others, they develop strategy and capacity beliefs that promote feelings of competence in school, and self-esteem increases.

Finding #2

The second question of interest for this study involved the relationship between girls' ages and their perceptions of personal competence, autonomy and relatedness. Regression analysis indicated that, for girls, there was a relationship between age and combined levels of perceived autonomy, feelings of security with teachers, self-concept, and seeking closeness to peers and teachers.

Examination of correlations between age and all variables, however, indicated no significant relationships. This suggests that the RAPS-S failed to elicit valid responses for girls in this sample.

Finding #3

The third question for this study involved the relationship between boys' length of stay with OBHC and their perceptions of personal competence,

autonomy and relatedness. Regression analysis indicated that, for boys, length of stay at OBHC was related to self-concept; to amount of closeness sought with peers, houseparents, and teachers; to lower levels of autonomy; and to beliefs that undermine perceptions of competence.

Examination of correlations between length of stay and subscale scores suggests that as boys' length of stay increases they increase in self-esteem. It should be noted, however, that age was also positively related to increases in self-esteem. The relationship between length of stay and self-esteem should be interpreted cautiously.

Finding #4

The fourth question of interest for this study involved the relationship between girls' length of stay with OBHC and their perceptions of personal competence, autonomy and relatedness. No subscales were found to contribute significantly to an equation predicting length of stay from the variables measured. This indicates that, for girls, there was no relationship between length of stay and perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Finding #5

The fifth question of interest for this study involved the relationship between boys' and girls' perceptions of personal competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Significant differences between boys' and girls' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness were found for four subscales. Examination of mean scores revealed that girls scored higher in Self-Satisfaction, Houseparent Psychological Proximity-Seeking, and Undermines Competence. Boys scored higher in Relatedness to Self. It should be noted that Self-Satisfaction and Relatedness to Self were significantly negatively correlated ($\alpha = .01$) for both boys and girls. The Self-Satisfaction scale indicates low self-esteem. Accordingly, girls tended to have lower self-esteem, more beliefs that undermine perceptions of competence, and felt a greater need for more closeness to houseparents than boys.

Discussion

Findings for the relationship between age and self-system processes are supported by past research. In a study comparing maltreated and nonmaltreated children, Lynch and Cicchetti (1991) found age to be related to children's psychological proximity-seeking with teachers, with older children reporting less need for proximity. In the present study, which confirmed these findings, psychological proximity seeking with teachers, houseparents, and peers entered the equations for predicting age with negative correlations (or low positive correlations).

For girls, the finding of no significant correlations with any of the variables suggests a weakness in the instrument to measure girls' perceptions of self-

system processes. In light of past research, several patterns should have emerged in the correlational analysis. Gilligan (1982) found that girls suffer a drop in self-esteem and become less intellectually and socially confident during adolescence. Perceptions of teacher support have been found to decrease as children enter middle school and continue through high school (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998). Similarly, Harter (1981) and Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, and Blumenfeld (1993) found that as children enter middle school they tend to be more confused about why things happen to them (i.e., competence beliefs decrease). A steady deterioration in intrinsic motivation with age has also been observed (Skinner, et. al., 1998). In interviews with girls, Haag (2000) found that girls experience much peer tension, are often self-conscious about their ability in the classroom, and want more involvement with teachers. Each of these factors has the potential for affecting girls' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, yet no relationship was found for age.

Alternatively, the present study found that as age increased, boys' self-esteem increased. This is consistent with results of a study by Block and Robins (1993) which showed a tendency for males to increase in self-esteem from early adolescence to young adulthood while females decreased in self-esteem during the same time period.

For length of stay, a significant correlation was found for boys only: Relatedness to Self, which is a measure of self-esteem. Very little research exists on the effects of children's length of stay in a child care facility. In a study of the

educational effects of residential care, Thompson, et. al. (1996), found that length of stay was related to positive educational outcomes for children in care. Children with longer lengths of stay showed greater consistency of outcomes after leaving care. Boys in the present study showed a significant positive relationship between length of stay and relatedness to self.

Surprisingly few studies on competence, autonomy, and relatedness considered gender differences. Boys in elementary school were found to have higher perceptions of competence than girls (Eccles, et. al., 1993). Levenson (1973) found that high nurturance from mothers correlated with high internal control (Intrinsic Self-Regulation) for boys but not for girls. Consistent with those findings, the present study showed that External Self-Regulation helps predict length of stay for boys in residential care. For girls, however, Levenson (1973) found that low protectiveness from mothers and a somewhat rejecting home environment were positively related to internal control (Intrinsic Self-Regulation) and greater independence. In the present study, girls' self-concept and self-esteem were lower than boys', girls sought more psychological proximity to houseparents, and girls had more beliefs that undermine perceptions of competence.

Conclusions

From this study, several conclusions may be made. First, children residing with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for children show a high level of resilience to

adverse conditions during their lives. Resilience has been defined as the capacity of individuals to overcome personal vulnerabilities and environmental adversities and as the ability to thrive physically and psychologically despite adverse circumstances during childhood and in later years (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998). Wang, et. al. (1998) list a number of qualities of resilient individuals, including: sense of competence, good problem-solving skills, high self-esteem, self-control, well-defined autonomy, high level of engagement, sense of "personal agency," selection of environments and relationships that support personal growth. Abuse, neglect, and trauma can negatively affect children's self-perceptions; however, scores on the Research Assessment Package for Schools - Student Report indicated average-to-high perceptions of personal competence, autonomy, and relatedness for this sample of children - some of the same qualities listed above. Additionally, results of this study are similar to results of other studies on children's competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The children in this sample do not differ markedly from other samples of children, again pointing to a measure of resilience.

A second conclusion supports past research (Daly & Dowd, 1992; Friman, et. al., 1996; McKenzie, 1999; Thompson, et. al., 1996) on the positive effects of residential child care. While this was not a program evaluation, the results indicate that children in the care of OBHC are developing normally and are experiencing social contexts that facilitate engagement in school and subsequent success.

The third conclusion is that Connell's (1990) process model of motivation is applicable to a sample of children in residential child care. Further research with similar samples of children as well as with children in more intensive residential treatment programs is needed to test its applicability.

A fourth conclusion relates to problems with RAPS-S scales and administration. Scales largely missed the competence and relatedness components for girls. Alternative measures of competence, autonomy, and relatedness could add validity to the study, while alternative methods of administration of the RAPS-S (e.g., smaller groups, individual administration, breaking test into sections) or use of houseparent and/or teacher report and observation might add reliability to the study of self-system processes in children.

Implications

This study has examined the self-system processes of children in residential care in relation to age, gender, and length of stay. The results of this study suggest implications for theory, for further research, and for practice with children in residential care.

In relation to theory, this study implies that Connell's (1990) process model of motivation is applicable to this sample of children. The model postulates that self-beliefs about personal competence, autonomy, and relatedness grow out of a relationship between the social context and psychological needs and that those

self-beliefs directly influence children's engagement in school and, subsequently, success in school. The pattern of correlations among subscales measuring competence, autonomy, and relatedness support the constructs of the model.

Implications for further research derive, first, from limitations of the present study. The size of the sample for the present study was small in relation to the number of variables. Data analysis should be considered cautiously; also, results may not generalize to other residential child care facilities. Research should be extended to facilities with similar programs to determine generalizability. Correlational studies with more residential facilities providing more intensive treatment facilities may give a more comprehensive view of the effects of adverse experiences on children's self-system processes. This could also provide needed research on developmental outcomes for children in care (Maier, 1997).

A second limitation involved the use of self-report instruments and the length and group administration of the RAPS-S. Future research should include teacher and houseparent reports as well as behavioral observations. Individual administration, interview format, and breaking the questionnaire into smaller portions may add greater validity and reliability to future studies.

A final limitation involved limited information regarding validity of the RAPS-S. Evidence from this study indicates the RAPS-S does not adequately measure girls' perceptions. Use of other instruments could serve to test psychometric properties, especially the validity of the RAPS-S for girls.

Further research should also involve an extension of testing Connell's model with the present sample. The RAPS-S includes measures of children's perceptions of the social context, of engagement or disaffection with school activities, and of coping with stress. Past research with the RAPS-S has generally involved Structural Equation Modeling to test cause and effect. Similar analysis with the present sample would be valuable in further testing the applicability of this model to the sample.

Implications for practice relate to results of the present study. First, girls in this sample scored significantly higher than boys in beliefs that undermine feelings of competence and in greater need for closeness to houseparents; they scored lower than boys in beliefs relating to self-esteem. These findings are consistent with the literature in children's self-system processes. Additionally, girls' lower feelings of competence and confusion regarding causes of outcomes in academic settings may reflect societal stereotyping of females (Eccles, et. al., 1993; Haag & AAUW, 2000). Nevertheless, they point to the need for greater attention to girls' self-esteem and beliefs about competence and personal control. Teachers and houseparents should provide contexts of structure in which expectations are clearly communicated and are optimally challenging, positive and negative consequences of individual action are recognized, and competence-relevant feedback is provided.

Extensive research by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (AAUW, 1999; Haag & AAUW, 2000) has revealed a

number of suggestions for schools in relation to adolescents' - and especially girls' - academic outcomes. Schools are encouraged to practice equity in education by realizing that avenues to helping all students achieve the same outcomes will probably vary depending on gender and class differences (among other factors). In order to develop competence and autonomy, instruction must challenge girls as well as boys, and girls must be given feedback - both positive and negative - on their performance in order to learn to respond constructively to criticism without decreasing in self-esteem and to defend their performance. Schools largely value behavior that conflicts with many girls' perceptions of feminine behavior; competitiveness and aggression are rewarded with teacher attention. Academic success for girls seems to require them to take on masculine behaviors (Fine, 1997). Schools must look at the strengths in learning of all groups and incorporate them into pedagogy. Schools must also begin to focus on more than the "technical perspective" of education (test scores, other achievement measures). The human and social dimensions of school weigh heavily on girls' minds and ultimately affect their learning experience (Haag & AAUW, 2000). When asked what they would most like to see changed in school, girls overwhelmingly indicated relational rather than programmatic change was needed. Girls wanted teachers and administrators to respect their ideas, to show concern for both academic and personal concerns of students, and to help them know how to meet social pressures. These girls were asking for help in developing competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

The second implication for practice relates to the development of autonomy. No significant correlations were found for girls or boys in autonomy. Practices should be examined to see that they provide autonomy support, which allows children opportunities for choice and initiative, recognition of feelings and personal goals and values, and gives a sense that activity is connected to personal goals and values.

Third, although a reduction in psychological proximity seeking seems to be a typical outcome of development, children in residential care should be provided with a context of involvement by both houseparents and teachers. Research has suggested that, while parental abuse may lead to more depressive symptomatology in children, "compensatory relationships" can provide the relatedness needed to offset such effects (Toth & Cicchetti, 1996).

This study has examined the relationship of children's age, gender, and length of stay in a residential child care facility to self-system processes associated with psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Results were largely consistent with existing literature. Implications for theory, research, and practice were also examined in light of results and with the goal of positive academic and emotional outcomes for children who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma.

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APPENDIX A

AUTHORIZATION FOR RECORD REVIEW

Oklahoma Baptist homes for children

Tony Kennedy
President

Home Office
3800 North May Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-6506
Phone: (405) 942-3800
Fax: (405) 946-6404
E-Mail: info@obhc.org

April 30, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

Regenia James has been authorized by Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, Inc., to conduct assessments of children in residence as part of our educational program. The information gained from these assessments will assist us in further evaluating the educational needs of children in our care and in planning for and providing the best educational environment possible for children. In order to facilitate the assessment process, Ms. James will have access to children's confidential files in order to obtain demographic and educational background information. We understand that, should any research derive from the assessment process, no identifying information will be used and all names are confidential.

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children serves as educational executor for children in residence, and is given written permission by children's parents/guardians at the time of placement to authorize any educational assessments deemed necessary.

Sincerely,

Tony Kennedy

Tony Kennedy
President

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: August 5, 1999 IRB #: ED-00-149

Proposal Title: "RELATIONSHIP OF CHILDREN'S SELF-SYSTEM PROCESSES TO AGE, GENDER, AND LENGTH OF STAY IN A RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE FACILITY"

Principal Investigator(s): Diane Montgomery
Regenia James

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature:

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

August 5, 1999
Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX C

RECORD REVIEW FORM

RECORD RETRIEVAL FORM Subject #

Demographic Information
Age: _____
Gender: _____
Date of Placement:_____
Ethnicity:
Grade in School:

Previous out-of-home placements:

School grades :

History of school disciplinary action:

Special education placement: LD ___ EMH ___ ED ___ Other _____

Previous drug abuse: Yes ___ No ___

Previous unlawful activity:

History of Abuse: Physical ____ Sexual ____ Emotional ____ By whom? _____

Family of Origin:
____ Traditional (Biological mother and father)
____ Single-parent (Circle one: Mother Father)
____ Step-family
____ Extended family (Describe: _____)
____ Other placement (Describe: _____)

Father:
Education _____
Occupation _____
Income _____

Mother:
Education _____
Occupation _____
Income _____

Competence

A. PROMO (Promotes Competence): _____

B. UNDER (Undermines Competence): _____

C. COMPETENCE MAXIMIZATION (Promo - Under): _____

Autonomy

A. External Self-Regulation: _____

B. Introjected Self-Regulation: _____

C. Identified Self-Regulation: _____

D. Intrinsic Self-Regulation: _____

E. Relative Autonomy Index (RAI): _____

Relatedness

A. Emotional Quality:
   Houseparent _____
   Teacher _____
   Peer _____

B. Psychological Proximity-Seeking:
   Houseparent _____
   Teacher _____
   Peer _____

APPENDIX D

SELECTED SUBSCALES OF RAPS-S

The Research Assessment Package for Schools – Student Report (RAPS-S), First Edition

I. Perceived Competence

A. Perceptions of Control

I can do well in school if I want to.
I can't do well in school. (R)

B. Strategies

1. Unknown

I don't know what it takes to get good grades in school.
I don't know how to keep myself from getting bad grades.

2. Powerful Others

The best way for me to get good grades is to get my teacher to like me.
I won't do well in school if the teachers don't like me.

3. Effort

Trying hard is the best way for me to do well in school.
If I don't do well on my schoolwork, it's because I didn't try hard enough.

4. Ability

I have to be smart to get good grades.
If I'm not smart, I won't get good grades.

5. Luck

I have to be lucky to do well in school.
If I'm unlucky, I won't do well in school.

C. Capacity

1. Powerful Others

I can get my teacher to like me.
I can't get my teacher to like me.

2. Effort

I can work really hard in school.
I can't work very hard in school.

3. Ability

I'm pretty smart in school.
I'm not very smart in school.

4. Luck

I'm pretty lucky at getting good grades.
I am unlucky in school.

II. Perceived Autonomy

A. External Self-Regulation

Why do I do my homework? Because I'll get in trouble if I don't.
Why do I work on my classwork? So that the teacher won't get mad at me.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because that's the rule.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because the teachers say we have to.

B. Introjected Self-Regulation

Why do I do my homework? Because I'll feel bad about myself if I don't do it.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because I'll be ashamed of myself if it doesn't get done.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because I'll be embarrassed if I don't get it done.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because I'll feel guilty if I don't do it.

C. Identified Self-Regulation

Why do I do my homework? Because I want to understand the subject.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because I want to learn new things.
Why do I do my homework? Because I want to learn new things.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because doing well in school is important to me.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because I think it is important.

D. Intrinsic Self-Regulation

Why do I do my homework? Because it's fun.
Why do I do my homework? Because I like to do it.
Why do I do my classwork? Because it's fun.
Why do I work on my classwork? Because it's interesting.

III. Relatedness

A. Relatedness to Self

When I think about myself, I feel happy.
When I think about myself, I feel important.
When I think about myself, I feel proud.
When I think about myself, I feel unhappy. (R)
When I think about myself, I feel bad. (R)

B. Self-Satisfaction

I wish I felt better about myself.
I wish I were someone else.
I wish I like myself better.

C. Houseparent Emotional Security

When I'm with my houseparents, I feel good.
When I'm with my houseparents, I feel happy.
When I'm with my houseparents, I feel ignored. (R)
When I'm with my houseparents, I feel mad. (R)
When I'm with my houseparents, I feel unhappy. (R)

D. Houseparent Psychological Proximity Seeking

I wish I could talk about more things with my houseparents.
I wish my houseparents would spend more time with me.
I wish my houseparents knew more about how I feel.
I wish my houseparents would talk with me more.

E. Teacher Emotional Security

When I'm with my teacher, I feel happy.
When I'm with my teacher, I feel good.
When I'm with my teacher, I feel ignored. (R)
When I'm with my teacher, I feel mad. (R)
When I'm with my teacher, I feel unhappy. (R)

F. Teacher Psychological Proximity Seeking

I wish my teacher would spend more time with me.
I wish my teacher knew me better.
I wish I could talk about more things with my teacher.

G. Peer Emotional Security

When I'm with my classmates, I feel good.
When I'm with my classmates, I feel happy.
When I'm with my classmates, I feel ignored. (R)
When I'm with my classmates, I feel mad. (R)
When I'm with my classmates, I feel unhappy. (R)

H. Peer Psychological Proximity Seeking

I wish I could talk about more things with my classmates.
I wish my classmates would spend more time with me.

(R) = Item response reversed for scoring

VITA

Regenia C. James

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Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: AN ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S SELF-SYSTEM PROCESSES IN RELATION TO GENDER, AGE, AND LENGTH OF STAY IN A RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE FACILITY

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