ASSESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN A RESIDENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION
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To my Pastor for expecting the best from everyone

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Residential schools represent part of the educational services continuum aimed at meeting the unique needs of gifted adolescents (Cross & Miller, 2007). These schools provide a comprehensive learning environment that encourages growth and achievement beyond what traditional schools offer. There are approximately twenty public residential high schools in the U.S. established for gifted and talented students (Cross & Miller, 2007). The academies vary in the type of academic programs afforded including science, mathematics, art, humanities or some combination and have their own faculty in one model. A second model of residential academies also provides early entrance to college, permits students to graduate with an associate’s degree and a high school diploma simultaneously, but operates without its own faculty. This model of residential school relies on the faculty of the university with which it is affiliated. Regardless of the academic emphasis or faculty source, residential schools provide a social context where adolescents learn more about themselves and how they relate to other gifted students. The purpose of this study was to better understand how students are affected by attending a residential school.

As an alumnus and staff member, I have personal and professional experience with residential schools. To this day, I still regard my residential high school experience as the most transformative academic encounter in my educational career. The change in academic and social context was paramount in providing me with a sense of positive academic directedness. I went from a public school where academic achievement was secondary, or even tertiary, to a place where everyone was invested in educational advancements. This transition prompted me to put
more energy into my academics while reducing many of the traditional distractions and eliminating treacherous idle time. At my former high school, athletics or even the colors you wore (blue or red) symbolized your rite of passage to social approval. At the Academy, you were not demonized for studying. In fact, in my experience, you were respected and admired for your diligence. You were encouraged to think differently and to be creative in your self-expression. This social context provided an ideal setting for diverse academic achievement and was conducive to advancing my academic development.

Beyond the obvious academic challenges, transitioning through this selective residential school was not without some adversity. As a student, I perceived the school’s demands more as an imposition upon my priceless teenage years. It felt intrusive. There was little or no time for television or extracurricular activities. In some ways, I abhorred the school because of the restrictions it placed on me as an eighteen year old; having a 10:00pm curfew and signing out everywhere I went, was not my idea of coming of age as a young adult. At graduation, I was ready to escape into the “free world.”

As the school’s mental health counselor, I have seen many students with issues related to adjusting to the Academy environment, homesickness, interpersonal conflicts, academic disappointment and other psychological concerns. It is refreshing to witness these same students mature and overcome obstacles. I tend to see an overrepresentation of students who experience difficulties. I surmised that this was likely not an accurate representation of students’ experiences. I can sympathize with students about the difficulties and personal sacrifices made when attending, but am also aware of the potential benefits. As the primary researcher and interviewer, it was my responsibility not to necessitate my personal notions or expectations, but to allow students to freely tell their story and grasp a truer representation of the Academy
experience. At the same, my experience and role enabled me to approach students and obtain information as a familiar part of the residential community.

The educational environment plays a critical role in providing experiences that cultivate the development of student potential. Researchers have described the importance of the interaction between environment and the student as a means to optimize potential attainment (Coleman & Cross, 1988; Cross & Coleman, 2005; Dai & Renzulli, 2000; Porath, 2006; Renzulli, 2005; Runco, 1999). Ideally, students are placed in an educational setting that best fits their needs. The purpose of a residential school is to provide a stimulating physical, social, and intellectual environment in which gifted students can thrive. This study examines the psychological changes students experience while attending a residential school using archival data from an outcome measure.

Outcome measures are an effective research method to track patient progress in psychotherapy (Burlingame, Wells, Lambert and Cox, 2004; Cannon, 2008; Ridge, 2007). Principally, outcome measures are used to track changes in functioning. Gathering information from the individual client to gain insights about the effectiveness of treatment is described as an important part of assuring positive outcomes in therapy (Lambert & Ogles, 2004; Burlingame, Wells, Lambert and Cox, 2004). This patient-focused research approach allows practitioners to modify treatment by tracking client progress on a session-to-session basis. The youth outcome measures were developed as a means to better address the mental health needs of adolescents in psychotherapy. The youth outcome measures are a continuation and extension of an adult version of the instrument, the Outcome Questionnaire (OQ-45). The OQ-45 is a self-report outcome measure designed for repeated measurement of client progress through the course of therapy and at termination (Wells, Burlingame, & Lambert, 1999). Initially, a parent version of an adolescent
measure was developed called the Youth Outcome Questionnaire (YOQ), which assessed the parent’s report of the progress of his or her child. Although the YOQ was useful, researchers recognized an inherent limitation of this version, as parents were found to be poor reporters of adolescent internalized difficulties and experiences. The Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report 2.0 (YOQ-SR; Wells, Burlingame, & Rose, 2003) was developed to help remedy this limitation by assessing psychological well-being from the adolescent’s perspective. The YOQ-SR data is used in a similar fashion to investigate the psychological changes gifted students experience when attending residential schools.

Residential schools require adaptations for the students that in-school gifted programs do not. By enrolling in a residential school, students must transition early away from home, family and friends, endure rigorous academic demands and form entirely new peer groups. These challenges are unique to residential schools. The possibility of experiencing stress when attending a residential school is increased because of these factors. Nonetheless, students face greater challenges likely to enhance the individual’s intellectual and emotional development. “It behooves us to understand student adjustment to these schools so that they might be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them” (Dunn, Putallaz, Sheppard & Lindstrom, p 467, 1987). The sentiment of this appeal was the motivation for this study; to understand the adjustment experience of students in a residential school. Additionally, Marsh (1987) asserted that “there is an important need for research on what actually happens when students move from one academic setting where the average ability level is quite different, and on the individual characteristics which determine how students will react to this stressful transition” (p. 292). Researchers are encouraged to seek out more information about how transitioning to more challenging schools affects students and how they adjust to residential schools. In order to gain
more information about the student experience, this study utilized quantitative data collected by the school as well as conducting phenomenological interviews with students. The resulting analysis provided insights about the psychological changes gifted students experience at residential academies.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine psychological and behavioral changes gifted students experience when attending a residential school. This study was conceived out of one residential school’s research initiatives to better understand the experiences of the students it serves. First, this study used archival data from the YOQ-SR collected over the course of an academic year. The investigator was interested in using the data to understand how this transition and subsequent in-school experiences affect the psychological functioning and development of the students. As with psychotherapy, YOQ-SR data can be used to track the progress of students enrolled in a residential academy for the gifted. Similar to the goal in psychotherapy to promote mental health and well-being of clients, one goal of residential schools is to promote the healthy development of gifted students. Personal growth can occur throughout the learning process. By evaluating students with the YOQ-SR, the study provided a systematic analysis of the student perspective on psychological and behavioral domains affected when acclimating and living in a residential school. In addition to the YOQ-SR data, this study included phenomenological interviews of nine students to provide in depth information about the student experiences at the school. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative components. This combination produced a richer description of the personal growth and psychological changes that occurred.

Educational experiences like those in residential schools are intended to help students move toward fulfilling their potential. The concept of developing potential is particularly
significant when considering the gifted, as they have higher achievement potentials than the non-
gifted and require different degrees of challenge to nurture advanced development (Coleman &
Cross, 2001; Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002). The Indiana Code identifies a gifted
student as one who “performs at or shows potential for performing at an outstanding level of
accomplishment” (2003, IC 20-10.1-5.1-2 Sec 2) relative to their same age peers within a similar
environment. The environment can shape how the student’s performances are interpreted and
also how his or her potential is developed. In a qualitative study intended to identify social and
emotional themes of gifted children, Sowa, McIntire, May & Bland (1994) concluded, “The
adjustment of gifted children must be viewed in relation to their environment” (p. 97). Therefore,
it is vital to examine how these students are experiencing challenges within context to understand
how they are affected and adapting.

Research Questions

To guide the direction of the research, the study focused on one primary question.

1. What perceived psychological and behavior changes do gifted students experience at a
residential school?

The researcher hypothesized that student YOQ-SR scores reveal some form of change
over the course of the year. Wherein, students initially experienced an increase in distress levels
(i.e. as indicated by increasing YOQ-SR scores) near the beginning of the year as they adjust to
the new setting. The researcher hypothesized that the YOQ-SR scores decreased as the year
progressed; meaning, students’ psychological well being being improved over time. As an added point
of interest the researcher compared the junior class scores with the senior class as well as any
gender differences. The resulting analysis enabled the researcher to speak to the follow some
practical concerns: does the school positively or negatively affect the students? Was the
environment promoting significant growth and development? Or did their experiences causing them increased levels of distress? If so, then in what areas are students experiencing distress (i.e., emotional, somatic, interpersonal, etc)? Additionally, what suggestions can be made to help students better adjust at these schools?

**Significance of the Study**

This study was underpinned by the School-Based Conception of Giftedness (SCG; Cross & Coleman, 2005) in considering the effect school environment has on student development. Cross and Coleman (2005) created the SCG to improve communication and to clarify the roles and responsibilities educators and administrators have in developing student talent while recognizing the inherent limitations for gifted students using the more common *whole child model of schooling*. Cross and Coleman asserted the whole child model of schooling “presumes that children should be relatively well-balanced” (p. 58). This model stems from the notion that there is a need to insistently fill developmental holes and establish normalcy across educational domains. The SCG instead uses the *talent/multiple abilities model of schooling*, which “presumes that the goal of education is to maximize advanced development” (p. 58). Any lack in an area unrelated to the development domain is considered minor. The whole child model contradicts the talent/multiple abilities approach, because pursuing balanced development is considered irrelevant to fulfilling advanced development. The type of model used can influence teacher and parent appraisals of student developmental needs. With the talent/multiple abilities model of schooling, when a student’s performance diminishes, the lack of development is traced to ineffective teaching rather than learner deficiencies. Likewise, as the student moves deeper into a particular domain of talent, the environment becomes increasingly important to fostering advanced development. The SCG theory emphasizes the school context as a significant part of
talent development. Cross and Coleman argued that the school organization and curriculum should be modified to help nurture this type of student. This approach is said to become increasingly important as the student ages and demonstrates further mastery in a given domain. Since residential schools generally serve students in their last years of high school, they should focus on transitioning students from having potential to performing within their talent/ability domain. In residential schools, students have opportunities to develop expertise in an area of interest and explicitly demonstrate mastery through academic achievement. These opportunities for students are as vital to their academic development as they are to their psychological development because they provide affirming and validating experiences that can strengthen the self-concept. To address these academic concerns, a variety of curricular models were researched and incorporated into the traditional school’s structure to advance the learning of gifted students (Baker & McIntire, 2003; Renzulli, 2005; VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2005). A gifted student may be recommended to participate in various programs including advanced placement, honors classes, grade skipping, pull-out program, or some modified instruction technique such as enrichment, acceleration, or differentiated curriculum to better promote his or her development in a given academic domain (Tomlinson, 2003). However, these adaptations are limited because they may not meet the social and emotional needs of gifted students, particularly for adolescents. During adolescence, students experience a number of critical biological, cognitive, and social transitions (Sternberg, 2007). Adolescents go through puberty, develop more complex ways of processing information and establish stronger relationships outside of the family. Furthermore, Cross (1997) described the gifted as having unique exogenous needs. These needs include feeling accepted and affiliated with like-minded students, and also being recognized for their accomplishments. Unlike other in-school academic adaptations, residential schools are able to
provide an encompassing social and academic community, which includes support services that are specifically designed to cater to the needs of gifted adolescents (Kolloff, 2003). Also, residential schools are able to be more responsive to the needs of students developing specific talents.

In addition to having different educational needs, gifted students have different social and emotional needs (Colangelo, 1991; Cross, 1997; Silverman, 1993a). The field of gifted studies is dominated by theoretical research on this subject (Buescher, 1985; Mendaligo & Peterson, 2007; Porath, 2006; Silverman, 1993b; Silverman, 2002). The information generated in this study added to the empirical research base on the psychological experiences of the gifted. In addition, this study was distinctive because it used data from several administrations of an assessment providing more information about changes that occurred over the course of one academic year. This was an expansion to other studies that have used two administrations of an instrument over a two-year period (Cross, Adams, Dixon & Holland, 2004; Marsh, 1987). The shortened time period and frequency of assessments used will allow the researcher to look at changes in student functioning more closely. The focus of this study was on the self-reported student behavioral and psychological experiences. In addition, the research included qualitative interviews that enhanced the data collected by providing first-hand accounts from students currently enrolled in the school. These interviews were with students from whom the quantitative data had also been collected. Hence, this research adds meaningful information to the literature on gifted students, residential schools, outcome assessment and counseling services in educational settings.

When attending a residential school, students move away from family and friends and are immersed into a new environment without immediate access to their former support system. Even students who did not perceive their home and former schools as secure or supportive still
must adapt to an unknown environment with different academic expectations and social interactions. At the same time, it provided them with a social network of like-minded peers and stimulating coursework (Coleman, 2005), creating a sense of affiliation and meaningful educational objectives. These are critical environmental transitions that affect them in a number of ways. The results produced by this study speak to concerns about the adjustment issues at residential schools for gifted students providing more information about the social and emotional needs of this population.

Residential schools are in a unique position as academic institutions to make validating and affirming contributions to the lives of gifted students. They represent an alternative in gifted education for adolescents. By incorporating the residential component to education, they offer a broader approach to the developmental needs of gifted adolescents. Furthermore, these schools are establishments where gifted adolescents can be understood as a group. For that reason, this study provides more information about how a residential school environment affects the student. More information was needed to understand how students are affected by and adapt to the challenges in these schools. This study aids with this endeavor.
Definition of Terms

*Giftedness.* For the purposes of this study, giftedness was defined as students who are enrolled at a residential school for gifted and talented juniors and seniors. These students were considered to have traits of giftedness based on meeting the admission requirements of the school, which include standardized test scores, historical grades, teacher recommendations and student essays.

*Psychological Adjustment.* Psychological adjustment was defined as the level of distress students and subsequent change as reported on the six subscales of the YOQ-SR and the resulting composite Total Score. The Total Score reflects the total distress in the adolescent’s life. A higher score indicates more distress. A Total Score of 47 or higher signifies clinical levels of distress. The tracking of this score represented how students are adjusting over time. The subscales provide information about which areas of psychological adjustment are most or least affected based on how the score rises or falls.

Assumptions

The first assumption of this research was that students admitted to the school are gifted. In other words, identification as “gifted” was solely based on the school’s admission requirements. Therefore, the label of “gifted” used may not generalize to other conceptualizations of giftedness. The researcher also assumes the participants responded to the instrument honestly. It was possible that students may have under-reported distress levels on the instrument. Other than instructions for the participant to be honest, there was no method on the instrument to assess response misrepresentation. Furthermore, the degree to which extraneous variables may have affected outcome scores is unknown. The researcher assumed the changes in scores were related to the experiences at the school. Nonetheless, the researcher acknowledged
the influence of other environmental factors beyond those that exist in the residential school community.

**Limitations**

The results of the study may be affected by maturation among the students. Students develop naturally over the course of the data collection. This was the reason for the interviews, which allowed students to dialogue about their experience at the academy. The outcome measure (YOQ-SR) was designed to distinguish clinically significant change, which helped in making determinations about whether the changes are significant and/or due to student maturation. These groups vary in some characteristics (i.e. gender, ethnic, SES and/or academic ability). It was unknown to what degree these differences may affect psychological adjustment overtime. Furthermore, no data was collected in this study from the general population to address how gifted students compare to other groups. This study utilized the data compiled by the YOQ-SR test developers to make comparisons with other adolescent groups.

Only those individuals who took the instrument at least three times were used in the analysis. Therefore, this study may also be limited by attrition rates; some students left the school for some reason and some did not take the instrument each consecutive time. The outcome state of students who did not complete the assessment less than three times or of those who left the school is unknown.
Summary

Making informed modifications to our school systems is a vital part of reaching societal goals of improved education for youth. Purcell, Burns, Tomlinson, Imbeau and Martin (2002) asserted the need for high quality curricula in the schools for young gifted and talented students is “more critical than ever” (p. 306). Furthermore, gifted individuals have been described as the most precious natural resource in our society (Pfeiffer, 2001). Gifted students should be prepared to make meaningful and innovative contributions to our society with the assistance of our schools. Therefore, it is imperative that schools are equipped to better serve gifted students and are attentive to their emotional and social needs. Javits Gifted and Talent Students Education Act (Javits) formally prescribed this requirement. Congress originally passed the Javits in 1988 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to support the development of talent in U.S. schools. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the most recent addition to the ESEA.

To ensure that additional provisions for these students are made, the U.S. Federal Government established Javits to provide funding to support the development of gifted programming for students. These initiatives include the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT), which is aimed at understanding gifted education and developing empirical evidence based gifted programming. The topic of educational adjustment and growth deserves special consideration because gaining more information helps to articulate ideas we have about creating dynamic and innovative learning environments for our youth. Gifted students have the ability to achieve at the highest levels in our society. It is critical that we understand the perspective of these individuals during this transitory developmental period,
which is adolescence. With this kind of knowledge, schools may better understand how to meet the needs of students with exceptional gifts and high ability levels.

Residential schools are unique educational environments that can supply the diverse needs of gifted adolescents. Nonetheless, these schools inherently require students to make a number of adjustments in how they function socially, emotionally and cognitively. The YOQ-SR provides a systematic, yet simple format for researchers to assess the changes students may encounter while attending a residential academy. Through this type of research, professionals can make modifications to the school’s environment with more sensitivity to the experiences of the students. In doing so, schools can establish a more cohesive fit between the student and the academic/social environment. The perspective of this researcher appreciates the advanced developmental needs of the student throughout the course of learning. Ultimately, the manner of approaching this topic is intended to develop student potential to its fullest.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As students transition to different social and academic environments with higher expectations and standards, such as attending high ability residential schools, they experience changes in their self-concept (Smith, 2006). The student may feel as though he or she is a “big fish” in his or her current school relative to peers. However, once the student transitions to a high ability residential school or another more challenging environment his perception changes to feeling less capable than or equal in comparison to the new peer group. This review focuses on the research about how this transition dynamic affects students’ self-concepts and performance.

Researchers have deliberated about how more challenging school environments affect students’ self-concepts and academic achievements (Werts & Watley, 1969; Astin, 1969; Marsh & Parker, 1984; Marsh, 1987; Dai, 2004). This phenomenon has been referred to as the “big fish little pond effect” (BFLP; Marsh & Parker, 1984). The BFLP is said to occur when a student adopts a lower academic self-concept by comparing him or herself to more capable students (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1998). Essentially, the environment in which the student is learning will affect his or her self-perception, thereby influencing how the student behaves and achieves. Changing environments (i.e., ponds) impacts how the well the student (i.e., the fish) flourishes. This effect entails issues related to frame of reference, the context in which the student is developing; and social comparison, the manner in which the student compares themself to others, among other factors (i.e. personality, socio-economic status [SES], previous experience with rigorous curriculum, family dynamics, overall ability, etc.).
Big Fish Little Pond Effect Research

The school environment can have a significant impact on the development of students. Marsh and Parker (1984) designed a study to examine the environmental factors that influence the components of student self-concept. The major stake in BFLP is the importance of academic self-concept. Marsh and Parker found that students in high ability/high-socioeconomic status (SES) schools had lower academic self-concepts than students attending low-SES/low-ability schools. The students who attend more affluent schools perform at higher levels, but they have less confidence in their academic ability regardless of their actual academic ability. This in part can be explained by the frame of reference students use to compare their academic performances.

As described in the study, the frame of reference model assumes a student’s classmates function as a reference group which influences academic self-concept by comparing oneself to that group. The higher the group’s overall performance then the more the individual perceives themself as comparably less academically able. This relative upward comparison has a significant impact on the academic self-concept of the student.

Furthermore, Marsh and Parker (1984) found that academic self-concept was more highly correlated with academic achievement in the high-SES schools than in the low-SES schools (.68 and .42, respectively). It is possible that students in high-SES schools utilize a more accurate representation of their academic ability because they have more resources by which to measure their ability. Whereas, students in low SES school may utilize other factors not related to academic performance such as their interest or personal enjoyment in school. This also means that changes in academic performance have a lesser effect on academic self-concept for students in low-SES schools. In addition, students with average academic abilities were self-described as below average in a high SES and above average in the low SES schools. Even so, students at
high-SES schools had higher academic achievements than those at low-SES schools. However, if academic self-concept were a consideration, then it would be better for students to remain in a low-SES school based on these results.

Merely the school environment does not hinder a student’s achievement, but it should be seriously considered as a factor that can affect student academic performance and self-concept. The Marsh and Parker study supports the notion that enrolling a student in a higher SES/ high ability school can motivate the individual to achieve more. Nonetheless, this student was likely to experience a lowered academic self-concept as a result, which supports the BFLP. How important is academic self-concept to the overall well-being of the student? Students are likely to experience a shift in their self-perception when they change settings and transition to college or another school (Smith, 2006).

In a follow up study, Marsh (1987) further examined the influence of BFLP on academic self-concept and on academic performance. In this study Marsh added a longitudinal component to assess any causal effect of academic self-concept on subsequent academic performance. Using path models, he was able to substantiate that academic self-concept has a causal effect on subsequent school performance, and approximately one-quarter of this effect is due to BFLP. Over the course of one year, the presence of a lowered academic self-concept was shown to actually lower academic performance. This finding supports the notion that BFLP has long-term implications that extend beyond just the initial lowered academic self-concept. However, there are some clear limitations in how the information was collected. The longitudinal data only included students who attended the same school. Therefore, the reported outcome did not include the effects of transitions between or among schools. Furthermore, the data was only collected from 10th grade males. These factors are likely to limit the generalizability of the findings.
Nonetheless, Marsh (1987) concluded BFLP is a primary function of school-average GPA rather than school-average SES as represented in the previous study (Marsh & Parker, 1984).

To address the concerns related to the effects of changing schools, Manor-Bullock (1994) conducted a study at a residential academy for gifted and talented students, ages 15 to 18, examining changes in self-concept and social comparison. She administered the Self Description Questionnaire III (SDQ) before students started coursework during the first week of the fall semester and during the first week of the spring semester. The SDQ is intended to measure aspects of self-concept. Manor-Bullock found academic self-concept actually decreases between these periods. Repeated measures analysis indicated that academic self-concepts (Mathematics, Verbal, and Problem Solving) decreased significantly from summer to fall to spring. Overall, academic self-concept decreased for all students between summer and fall, but only students with a history of prior rigorous education experienced a significant decrease from fall to spring. The researcher did not provide any definitive reason for the changes experienced by students with rigorous course history. It is possible that the classes in the new school were more challenging than what they had identified as rigorous in their former schools. It is also plausible that students who were not previously exposed to a rigorous curriculum experienced a lesser decrease in academic self-concept because they never felt that they were “big fish” by not participating in rigorous classes. Therefore, these students may experience fewer adjustment problems in academic self-concept. Or, students without rigorous course history may attribute academic struggles to environmental factors (i.e. the course or teacher) rather than to personal disposition. Though once again, there is evidence to support the BFLP with this outcome.

Nonetheless, some have criticized the BFLP theory (Dai, 2004; Plucker, Robinson, Greenspoon, Feldhusen, McCoach & Subotnik, 2004), expressing that it oversimplifies a more
complex social comparison process and accelerated schools or selective schools may be avoided because of this negative representation. It would be a misfortune if students hesitate to attend a selective residential school simply to avoid damaging an illusory personal positive image. Dai (2004) cites the affirming attributes of attending these selective schools. This has been referred to as the Reflected-Glory Effect (RGE) wherein students experience a sense of pride by being associated with attending high ability schools which actually offsets some of the negative effects of BFLP (Marsh, Kong & Hau, 2000). In other words, a student being selected to attend a school for the gifted affirms their academic self-concept as a capable or smart student even though they were not getting the same high grades as they were in their previous high school. Furthermore, the experience of upward social comparison has been found to motivate students in the classroom to improve performance (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons & Kuypers, 1999; Huguet, Dumas, Monteil & Genestoux, 2001). Overall peer performance expectations are elevated in the new environment. Being surrounded by higher achieving individuals can actually inspire the student to keep pace with his or her peers. This is an important phenomenon because it demonstrates another benefit of affiliating with higher achieving individuals. The divergent results across studies are likely due to methodological differences. In other words, researchers are using different approaches to studying the same phenomenon which in effect is highlighting the various pros and cons of attending a residential school.

In an attempt to reconcile divergent findings, Chanal & Sarrazin (2007) conducted a study and were able to replicate both perspectives. They concluded the two perspectives were not contradictory or exclusive but complementary. Chanal & Sarrazin (2007) explained when a comparison group is explicitly selected (i.e. a small group) as a frame of reference they might have potential benefits for the students’ self-concept or performance; however, when the
comparison was implicit (i.e. the entire class) then the negative effects on self-concept of the group can occur. Therefore, the impact of BFLP depended upon how and to which group the individual compares him or herself. This selection became a function of the individual and also the social groups with which the individual identifies and has access. Huguet, Dumas, Monteil and Genestoux (2001) explored this selection process and discovered students typically compared themselves upward to close friends as a means of self-improvement and that this identification was more likely to occur if the student perceived they have the ability to control the behaviors needed to improve relative to the social comparison group. The researchers used measures for comparisons by asking students to indicate how good they were “compared to most of their classmates” on a Likert 5-point scale from much worse to much better. Having students list the students to whom they preferred comparing their grades to in each course assessed measures of comparison-level choice. These results replicated the findings of Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons and Kuyper’s (1999) longitudinal study of 876 first year secondary education students. Blanton, et al (1999) found students’ tendencies to compare themselves to others who are performing better than them and to view him or herself as better than others actually predicted improved academic performance. Huguet, et al (1999) added that these comparison effects diminish over time as students change comparison groups within the school environment and become more self-evaluative.

There continues to be an ongoing investigation about the issues surrounding the effects of high ability schooling and the costs and benefits of making social comparisons in different academic environments. Seaton & Marsh, et al (2008) conducted three separate studies to reinvestigate the BFLP and divergent findings of previous studies. All studies demonstrated evidence to support that there are negative effects on student self-evaluation relative to the
average ability of the school. At the same time, there was also evidence that student performances improved as a result of the slight upward social comparison. They were able to surmise that the negative contrasting effects on self-concept and the positive assimilating effects on performance can and do coexist in high ability schools and in heterogeneous ability schools. The results of Seaton & March et al.’s (2007) studies suggested “the BFLP is not the result of upward comparisons in which the students engage spontaneously, but rather, as BFLP theory proposes, that it is the result of a comparison forced on the individual by the environment” (p.95). They asserted more prominence needed to be placed on comparisons imposed by the environment over which the individual has no choice. They reported that the effects of school average ability, a forced comparison, were consistently negative on self-evaluation. Whereas, when students are allowed to make their own selections with a more comparable group, self-evaluation was said to be never negative and sometimes positive.

Nonetheless, Seaton & Marsh, et al. (2008) were hesitant to offer any recommendations on what type of school environment would be best for gifted students. They only alluded to the notion that students may be able to avoid some of the negative effects of BFLP if they remain in more heterogeneous schools. This was likely due to access to a more diverse ability group and a lower overall ability school average for comparison. Furthermore, Piechowski (2007) describes gifted individuals as especially sensitive. Considering this trait, gifted individual may be particularly vulnerable to changing school environment resulting in an experience of BFLP. As a part of their sensitivity they may be more socially conscious of how they compare to their peers and thus become more distressed about how they may be viewed by others and the expectations they have for themselves. However, there is no research to support the notion that gifted students are more vulnerable psychologically in a given domain (Neihart, 2007).
In the BFLPE debate, Dai (2004) expressed a need to understand for whom and under what conditions the BFLPE will outweigh the benefits of attending a selective high ability school. Marsh, Hau and Craven (2004) agreed their results should at least prompt critical and rigorous evaluation of selective residential school communities. Residential schools can enlighten gifted students by exposing them to inspiring academic challenges and new social experiences (Cross & Miller, 2007). Ultimately, the social, emotional and academic aspects of the student need to be considered when making decisions for students not only for enrollment but also during the student’s tenure throughout the school. Providing more research based information will help stakeholders make better decisions about developing programs and accommodations for this unique population of students.

**Gifted Adolescent Characteristics**

Gifted adolescents have a number of distinctive social and emotional issues which can emerge depending on their experiences, including issues with perfectionism, nonconformity, social acceptance, personal identity, asynchronous development and motivation, among many other psychological constructs (Buescher, 1985; Cross, 2004; Neihart, Reis, Robinson & Moon, 2002; Schultz & Delisle, 2003). All of these characteristics can interplay as the student interacts with their environment, ultimately affecting potential development. Buescher (1985) characterized adolescence as a complex period wherein major cognitive, biological and social changes are occurring. In an attempt to understand how giftedness interacts with adolescence, Vialle, Heaven & Ciarrochi (2007) posited the question, “Does giftedness act as a protective factor for young people or does it exacerbate this critical developmental phase” (p. 570)? For instance, when the dynamics of giftedness are added to issues with self-concept during adolescence along with BFLP, what new challenges are likely to surface? Just as BFLP was said
to evolve over time (Blanton, et al, 1999; Huguet, et al, 2001), it is important to examine the developmental experiences of gifted individuals.

**Developmental Issues**

One of the most significant issues related to gifted individuals is the concept of asynchronous development. Originally called dyssynchrony, it was a term coined by Terrassier (1985) to describe the uneven development of gifted individuals. Silverman (1993a) recommended the term ‘asynchrony’ to describe this phenomenon because it precludes many of the negative overtones, noting that the prefix of *dys* signifies *hard, bad, or difficult*. Silverman (1993a) described asynchrony conceptually as having both internal and social aspects. Internal asynchrony pertains to unequally developing rates of intellectual, psychomotor, language, and affective attributes. We see asynchrony, for example, in a gifted child who is able to read early and then struggling with writing skills. Social asynchrony is said to be more noticeable because it occurs within a social context. Here, gifted students appear to be “out of step” with their same age peers. They are likely to display a more mature disposition and are “cognitively out of sync” (Silverman, 2002, p.31) with classmates. Many times they may be treated as “older” because of their cognitive maturity even though they are physiologically young and in some circumstances will react accordingly. For example, due to elevated cognitive awareness to their environment, they may exhibit seemingly intense emotional reactions. This intense reaction may be perceived as emotional immaturity. However, the child is not emotionally immature. In fact, the emotional development may be age appropriate (Piechowski, 2006; Sternberg, 2007). Instead, the child becomes overwhelmed by anxiety-provoking information because of their sensitized awareness. In this case, the cognitive processing of environmental stimuli and the emotional processing are
not matched. The heightened cognitive awareness results in an apparent intense emotional experience that is qualitatively different from the norm (Colangelo, 1989; Piechowski, 2006).

These sensitivities and intensities have been described as “overexcitabilities.” Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980), a Polish clinician and researcher, produced an elaborate conceptualization of these traits and how they evolve within the individual. He described these overexcitabilities as indicative of higher development potential (Nelson, 1989). In order to best understand how the overexcitabilities (OEs) function, it is useful put them into the context of Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration (Dabrowski, 1967). Similar to Jean Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development (Flavell, 1963), Dabrowski’s theory proposes five developmental levels: 1. primary integration, 2. unilevel disintegration, 3. spontaneous multilevel disintegration organization, 4. multilevel disintegration, and 5. secondary integration. Herein, “disintegration is the process by which instinctive modes of function deteriorate to enable higher order value systems to develop” (Silverman, 1993a, p. 639). The disintegrating process is said to most likely occur during puberty and also in times of crises. This makes adolescence in particular an important time of development, as transformations can occur in multiple areas (i.e. social, cognitive, psychological, and biological).

Overexcitabilities among gifted individuals have been researched empirically. According to Piechowski (2006), OEs exist in five forms including physical, sensual, imaginative, intellectual and emotional. Using the instrument Overexcitabilities Questionnaire II (OEQ II), Teiso (2007) demonstrated the presence of OEs among gifted students. The instrument was administered to a sample of elementary and middle school age students. Results of the study suggested significant differences between non-gifted and gifted students. She found gifted students have significantly higher mean scores on all five of the OE subscales than their non-
gifted peers. These differences were particularly pronounced on the Imaginational and Intellectual OEs. There was also a significant interaction between grade level and giftedness. Gifted elementary-school students had higher mean scores than their non-gifted peers on all OE subscales, while non-gifted middle-school students scored higher than their gifted peers on the Sensual and Imaginational OE subscales.

Based on Teiso’s findings, it seems reasonable to conclude there are developmental differences between gifted and non-gifted. However, because of the differences in class and gender, the findings inform us there are potentially age and gender influences on OEs as well as giftedness influences. At least in this study, the alpha reliability estimates were across all subscales ranges from .80 to .85. The data appeared to be valid for this sample being tested. Furthermore, the strength of this study is a diverse sample of 510 students from five different states throughout the east coast of the United States. Teiso also used a multifaceted state identification matrix for the gifted that included standardized tests of achievement, ability, or creativity. These practices suggest a robust and reliable representation of the diverse traits of gifted adolescents.

Identity

Erik Erikson’s Eight Stage Theory of Psychosocial Development marked adolescence as the period when individuals search for who they are (Erikson, 1950). This stage of psychosocial development is referred to as Identity versus Identity Diffusion. During this period, a student engages in exploration and experimentation to understand where he or she fits as an autonomous individual. Adolescents should experience a sense of identity confusion or mental moratorium as part of healthy development. Buescher (1985) cautioned that gifted individuals seek out an identity too hastily, resulting in early identity foreclosure. For example, he cited these individuals
tend to make career selections too early because they know what area they excel in academically. This premature decision may result in the individual cutting off other opportunities that are a part of normal identity resolution and spawn a sense of insufficiency in later adulthood. However, Kerr and Ghrist-Priebe (1988) described the gifted as having multiple abilities and interests which afford them the opportunity to explore a variety of options. Gifted individuals are considered open-minded and have an eagerness to learn more about the world around them. In either case, their perceptions can affect how identity develops during adolescence and should be accompanied by guidance to help the student develop properly.

Gifted students may also experience additional challenges in traditional school settings because they may have difficulty finding a peer group with which to identify, causing them to become isolated. Social engagements are a significant part of gifted development (Cross, 2004). Gifted adolescents should be exposed to like-minded peers to help them develop a social identity that includes an appreciation for cognition and high achievement. Otherwise, gifted adolescents may attempt to hide academic abilities and achievements in order to fit in (Coleman, 1985; Cross, Coleman & Stewart, 1994). This unfortunate experience would hinder the student from developing an appreciation of his or her gifted identity in a social context.

As discussed previously, Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration regards adolescence as a critical period for developing gifted potentials. As students transition from childhood to adulthood, they should have opportunities to be exposed to meaningful, diverse and challenging experiences that will help promote this development. Mahoney, Martin and Martin’s Identity Formation Model (2007) outlines a matrix to help professionals understand the various influences on identity development. Mahoney, Martin and Martin described twelve systems that influence personality development (e.g. self, family and family origin, cultural, vocational,
environmental, educational, social, psychological, political, physiological and developmental). They described four constructs—Validation (acknowledgement), Affirmation (reinforcement), Affiliation (association) and Affinity (connectedness)—representing the underpinnings that influence the development of gifted identity when interacting with these systems. The more systems are fulfilled across these constructs, the better sense the individual should have of who he or she is as a gifted individual. With these ideas about identity development in mind, it is important for stakeholders to create more opportunities across these systems to guide the student’s identity through adolescence successfully (Cross, 2004). This systematic approach to identity development can also be used to understand BFLP. The student’s system contributes to their self-concept. Using this rationale, BFLP represents the environmental (social) and educational (academic) aspects of identity. Within a given context, the constructs of identity formation are being fulfilled or abandoned. The student’s perception of their environment will impact his or her identity development. Furthermore, these issues should be considered in respect to BFLP and how changing environments may influence identity development and self-concept.

**Perfectionism**

Another pervasive problem gifted adolescents face is issues related to perfectionism (Delisle & Schultz, 2003). Developmentally, gifted students supposedly become obsessed with excelling in traditional schools and receiving praise from teachers and parents for their exceptional performances. Due to these experiences, they may feel deflated when they fail to accomplish something “perfectly” or strive for something that is unattainable. In addition, they may also begin to avoid more challenging tasks out of fear they will not be able to do it perfectly. This maladaptive behavior can ultimately hinder their motivation to achieve as they become increasingly complacent.
According to Parker (2000), perfectionism is not always as unhealthy as it has been represented (Burns, 1980; Pacht, 1984). Instead, he asserted healthy perfectionism actually helps motivate individuals to strive through adversity. He described perfectionism as having a “hierarchical structure with both healthy and unhealthy forms” (p. 69). These two forms are described as separate constructs rather than extreme ends of a single continuum. It appears that Parker is more describing the idea of striving for excellence as healthy rather than the obsessive debilitating effects of perfectionism. Nonetheless, Parker (2000) found perfectionism, contrary to popular belief, is no greater among the gifted than the non-gifted. These research findings help to dispel some myths about perfectionism among the gifted and its negative effects. This seems to be more of an issue of how perfectionism is conceptualized in Parker’s description.

Dixon, Lapsley and Hanchon (2004) also studied perfectionism among gifted adolescents. Using empirical typology, these researchers were also able to differentiate perfectionism into positive and negative manifestations. They described perfectionism as taking on maladaptive forms and adaptive forms. The pervasive type is described as well-organized but doubtful of ability to complete tasks. Students with this type of perfectionism tend to set high standards for themselves but react negatively when they are unable to attain their own expectations. These individuals also report more psychological distress (i.e., somatic concerns, depression, anxiety, and obsessive compulsive tendencies, poor coping styles, and lower self-image). In the other negative form of perfectionism called the mixed-maladaptive type, the individual is overly concerned with making mistakes and tends to set lower standards to avoid excessive criticism from parents. Unlike the pervasive types, these students need have little demand for organization, order, or neatness. Yet, they are described as psychologically similar to pervasive perfectionists. The mixed-adaptive type of perfectionism is described as well-
organized and self-confident. They set high personal standards, but they do not overreact negatively to mistakes. Psychologically, they have few psychiatric symptoms, are secure, adjusted, and have a strong sense of mastery.

This multidimensional approach to understanding perfectionism is important for making distinctions about how perfectionism can manifest. Based on these descriptive findings, teachers and parents should seek to reduce maladaptive manifestations of perfectionism, teach coping skills, and promote positive self-image in a supportive manner. In addition, teachers should seek to create a classroom environment where mistakes are expected and accepted. However, they should not assume perfectionism is a negative attribute, but should recognize that it can have inspirational effects that help the student adapt to new challenges. Essentially, this healthy or adaptive form of perfectionism does not fit traditional connotations of perfectionism. It seems to be an entirely different construct related to academic performance. When a student is able to break away from a drive to be flawless and embrace a degree of error, then perfectionism is no longer a concern for them. The task at this point is for the student to continue to improve and set reasonable personal goals.

Perfectionism is also an issue of consideration when understanding BFLP. Students who experience a lowered academic self-concept when changing to more challenging academic environments may suffer from maladaptive perfectionism. For example, the student perceives him or herself as less capable because they have more difficulty with higher academic demands and in turn experiences a lowered self-concept. As he or she takes note of other students who are seemingly doing well in spite of added demands only adds to a lower academic self-concept (i.e. BFLP). Nonetheless, it is the problem with perfectionism that may promote the low self-concept. Hewitt, Flett and Cheng (2008) were able to demonstrate that perfectionism was related to
irrational beliefs among adolescents. More specifically, Hewitt, Flett and Cheng explained that a
Self-Oriented type of perfectionism, in which the student demands perfection from him or
herself, is more related to forming irrational beliefs than other types of perfectionism (i.e.
Socially Prescribed perfection, in which the student perceives that others have high expectations
of them; and Other-oriented, in which the student has excessively high expectations of others).
These findings confirm the association between irrational beliefs and perfectionism and the role
they play in elevating the adolescent’s level of psychological distress (Hewitt, Flett & Cheng,
2008). Considering these results, there is a need to understand how much more students’ self-
perceptions and beliefs are negatively affected by changing to a more rigorous school
environment as in BFLP. This information will help us understand the nature and sources of
psychological distress for these students.

Social Needs

During adolescence, both meaningful academic achievements and significant social
interactions are being established. For the gifted adolescent, social and academic pursuits can
seem at times like adversaries. One potentially will be sacrificed at the expense of the other,
depending on the individual’s personality and the social or academic atmosphere. The
individual’s ability to adapt to these challenges during adolescence needs special attention in
order to understand what factors help or hinder this process.

A significant issue becomes what it means to be gifted during adolescence. Social
pressures can affect students’ identification with being gifted. According to Rimm (2002), gifted
adolescents do value intelligence; however, students were reportedly aware of the sometimes
negative social stigma which goes along with being smart during adolescence. Students may be
teased, bullied, or ostracized because of their high ability (Cross, 1997). Social acceptance and
peer groups are an important part of adolescence (Steinberg, 2007). The negative stereotype about being gifted or highly intelligent can affect a student’s behavior socially and academically. In essence, these students may feel different from their peer group and have been identified as such in part because of their participation in gifted programming and obtaining other academic achievements. The student is likely to alter his or her behavior or mask his or her ability by using humor or other diverting tactics. According to Coleman and Cross (2001), these students may even believe others think they are different, even if they do not view themselves as different. However, simply believing others view them as different can hinder their social interactions. This mindset along with explicit social pressures to conform can influence a student’s level of achievement and their participation in academic related clubs and programs, and increase social isolation.

Cross, Coleman and Stewart (1994) conducted an exploratory study examining the psychosocial experiences of two gifted adolescent groups: those who identified themselves as the same as their non-gifted peers (same group) and those who believed they were different (different group). Students were divided into these groups by selecting those on the extreme ends of the self-perception continuum. Using Bandura’s social cognitive theory as a framework, the researchers used the Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) to gather information about the social comparisons gifted students made with their non-gifted peers in different scenarios. The results indicated that in academic scenarios, both groups were just as likely to use some sort of deceptive technique to preclude social exclusion as they were to be truthful about their performance on an exam. In social scenarios, the same group was more likely to hide their true feelings about difficult situations in order to fit in, indicating they may not truly believe they are similar to their peers, though they may want to be seen that way. The different group, on the
other hand, recognized themselves as different and their behavior also reflected the ability to maintain normal social interactions without being viewed as unusual. These findings support theoretical ideas that gifted individuals are likely to modify their behaviors to “fit in” (Tannenbaum, 1962). For example, the student may not actually perform poorly academically, but express to others that he or she is being challenged in school to be more like his or her peers. Cross (1997) discussed the Information Management Model (IMM; Coleman & Cross, 1998) to illustrate ways that gifted individuals may adapt to social experiences in and outside of the school environment. The model represents the individual interacting with and responding to different environments and social expectations. As the individual develops, his or her self-perception about whether or not he or she feels different mediates behavior. At different points, the student makes decision based on his or her perceptions about how to interact based on these perceptions. Ultimately, the individual employs social coping strategies that fall on the continuum of visibility wherein the person can become highly visible and stand out from the group, at one extreme, or become invisible and blend in with other groups at the other extreme. The middle is described as disidentifiers who attempt to convince others that they are not like gifted students but more associated with a group that is stereotypically not perceived as gifted (i.e. gothic, emos, punks, druggies, jocks, etc.; Cross, 1997). These self-perceptions and resulting behaviors should help stakeholders understand why and how gifted students might adapt to cope with various social circumstances. These issues of psychosocial adaptation are also another dynamic that can relate to BFLPE. Herein, the depending on how students perceive themselves, the effects of BFLP could vary. In any case, the notion of academic self-concept remains a pertinent construct to understanding how the students develop in a given school environment.
Depression and Suicide

Another issue adolescents encounter are feelings of depression and increased risk for suicide. Adolescent suicide rates have more than tripled between the 1960s and 1990s (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). Furthermore, there was an eight percent increase between years 2003 to 2004, which was the largest single-year increase in fourteen years. Gifted adolescents seem to be impacted by these rates as much as non-gifted adolescents. As noted previously, the emotional intensity gifted adolescents are likely to experience in development may expose them to concerns with depression and suicide. Examining suicidal risk and implementing suicide prevention is critical because of its potentially devastating effects on the student and the individuals involved in their development.

The topic of suicide among the gifted has been examined closely (Cross, Cook & Dixon, 1996; Cross, Gust-Brey & Ball, 2002; Cross, Cassady & Miller, 2006). Researchers have found that giftedness is not a risk factor or predictor of adolescent suicide. The perplexities of suicide among the gifted arise because he or she is seemingly doing exceptionally well academically and is a capable individual. For a gifted individual to succumb to suicide seems counterintuitive. However, when a gifted individual does commit suicide, this behavior only adds fire to the negative psychological stigma of being gifted. At the same time, suicide in gifted populations reminds us these individuals are not immune to severe emotional distress and feelings of helplessness.

In spite of the myth that suicide is less likely to occur among the gifted (Cross, 2004), researchers have found that gifted adolescents do not differ from non-gifted adolescents in suicidal ideation (Baker, 1995; Cross, Cassady & Miller, 2006). There is virtually no empirical evidence that the incidence of suicide occurs more or less often for gifted adolescents. This may
be due to the differences in gifted identification methods across studies. Although increased suicidality among the gifted has been regarded as more of a conjecture than empirically supported (Gust-Brey & Cross, 1999), it was recognized as a significant issue for adolescent populations, which also affects the gifted. What has been highlighted in studies about suicide among the gifted was a better understanding of the traits and warning signs of suicide. Unstable emotional states, which include anger and depression, along with substance abuse, poor impulse control, and isolation establish a platform for suicidal risk. Circumstances such as embarrassment, relationship difficulty and family conflict may induce suicidal ideation with these individuals. Adults should be especially attentive to changes in behavior including talking of suicide, withdrawing, and sudden changes in school performance.

The impact of life events can have a significant effect on gifted adolescents. This is especially important when considering the research on BFLP and making decisions about the most appropriate learning environment for the gifted. Students are likely to experience some form of adjustment issue during transitions. Transforming these experiences from an insurmountable detriment to more a meaningful life lesson is an essential yet delicate process. It is not uncommon for the gifted to experience a certain degree of depression (Jackson, 1998). There is cause for great concern when depression develops into a self-harming state of mind. According to Jackson (1998), it can be these times of despair that help gifted teens transcend their circumstances through developing a more thorough understanding of their personal identity and the world around them.
Psychological Differences

In an analysis of empirical research on giftedness and psychological well-being, Neihart (1999) noted there are empirical and theoretical studies supporting two views of giftedness. Namely, giftedness makes individuals more either resilient or more vulnerable psychologically. This idea was likened to the divergent findings of BFLP as it appeared to induce both positive and negative connotations for students. Neihart critiqued the methods, samples and conclusions of research spanning over fifty years on the psychological concerns among the gifted. In reviewing her analysis of various studies on gifted, it appeared many of the differences between the studies’ results were due to differences in identification methods of giftedness and sampling groups. There was no clear consensus about what was meant by giftedness across studies and some gifted adolescents were at different developmental levels. This made establishing clear consensus about adolescence and giftedness more challenging. Even so, this evidence spoke to the heterogeneity that exists among gifted populations. Neihart (1999) concluded giftedness does influence the psychological well-being of the individual. Whether this effect was positive or negative was based upon the type and degree of giftedness, the educational environment and personality such as self-perceptions, temperament and life circumstances.

According to Neihart (1999) psychological well-being is essentially a function of educational setting, the nature and degree of giftedness and personality. This dynamic is reminiscent of the concerns with BFLP and finding a suitable academic environment that coincides with the social, emotional and academic needs of the student. Giftedness, however, was found not to be a precursor to pathology or psychological distress. Neihart also reported that gifted students who are achieving in specialized educational programs are just as adjusted as their non-gifted peers if not more so.
Other methods have been employed to understand the psychological characteristics of the gifted. In research on gifted adolescents, Sak (2004) synthesized studies utilizing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Sak noted the most common personality type found among the sample of gifted adolescents (N = 5,723) was Introversion, Intuition, Thinking and Perceiving (INTP). Sak also noted the most pronounced difference between gifted and non-gifted adolescents was a preference for Intuition over Sensing on the MBTI. Intuitive types are said to prefer to look at things holistically and are described as imaginative, speculative, analytical and creative. This world view seems to be more consistent with conceptions of giftedness (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). The results also support the findings of Teiso (2007) regarding the overexcitabilities of the gifted, given that they are evidentially more sensitive to their surroundings.

Dixon, Cross, Adams (2001) sought to better understand the experiences of gifted students by examining their psychological traits using the MMPI-A. At a residential high school for gifted students, the researchers used the MMPI-A, the Self-Perceptions Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) and the Self-Description Questionnaire III (SDQ III). The instruments were employed to assess psychological symptoms, perceived competence and self-concept respectively. Using cluster analysis they were able to identify six cluster groups among adolescents; the emerging cluster groups were 1) Math Superstars, 2) Socially Focused Students, 3) Non-athletes, 4) Low Overall, 5) Verbal Superstars and 6) Nonspiritual. Dixon, Cross and Adams (2001) found none of the cluster groups fell within the abnormal range on the MMPI-A. This is not unexpected given all of the participants were functioning well enough to be accepted into a selective school. Nonetheless, there were apparent psychological differences between the groups. For instance, Cluster 4 (Low Overall) revealed the highest level of depression. Cluster 5
(Verbal Superstar) had the lowest depression scales and higher general self-esteem. These findings indicate that regardless of the common decision to seek out a school for the academically gifted, there is psychological diversity among this group. They are distinct enough to be grouped separately even within the selective school.

The most disconcerting findings concern Cluster 4 (Lower Overall), wherein, they differed significantly from all of the other cluster groups on a number of MMPI-A subscales (i.e. Psychasthenia [phobia/obsessions], Schizophrenia, Social Introversion, and Depression). Although not clinically pathological, this group appears to experience some degree of psychological despair. Unfortunately, there was no information about what factors may have contributed to this psyche or what other abilities these individuals possess enabling them to continue to achieve in an academically rigorous setting in spite of this apparent psychological distress. In addition, these clusters were similar in character to the five (e.g. low self-concept, stereotypical, superstar, nonreligious/spiritual, poor physical ability/appearance/parent relations/“I don’t do math”) found by Manor-Bullock, Dixon & Dixon (1993) using just the SDQ III.

In a four year longitudinal study and cross sectional study, McCrae, R., Costa, P., Terracciano, Parker, Mills, De Fruyt, et. al. (2002) examined adolescent personality development among gifted students. The pattern of findings was summarized in terms of the five-factor model of personality (FFM; Digman, 1990), which provides a comprehensive framework for the systematic assessment of traits and their development (McCrae & John, 1992). The factors are named Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C), and each was defined by a number of more specific traits or facets. Together, these traits account for emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal, and motivational styles. Between the ages of 12 and 18, females were shown to increase on the
Neuroticism and Openness to Experience scales. Males showed increases on the Openness to Experience scale. The other scales had no significant changes during this age period. The changes on the O-scale seem consistent with notions about the developmental period of adolescence, wherein students are more exploratory and experimental. Furthermore, the O-scale was described as most closely related to moral reasoning, identity exploration, and ego development. Other changes were noted when some individuals at the age of 12 were introverts and emerged as extroverts at 18 years old, while others showed the opposite path. These findings provide an interesting examination of the developmental patterns in adolescence. However, there is no information about the factors influencing these traits or about the effects of school transitioning.

The notion of giftedness during adolescence continues to be an area of interest and concern. Vialle, Heaven & Ciarrochi (2007) examined 65 gifted high school students to better understand the relationships among personality factors, social support, emotional well-being, and academic achievement. The sample was drawn from a longitudinal study of 950 students. The researchers found gifted students were performing better academically than their typical peers. However, they reported increased feelings of sadness and feeling more alone. Is this another indication of sensitivities to the environment? It is plausible.

The researchers also commented that gifted students’ teachers were reportedly unaware of the emotional distress they were experiencing as teachers rated them as having superior adjustment and less likely to have emotional and behavior problems. Teachers can have misperceptions about gifted students (Vialle et al., 2007). Good grades can bias judgments about a student’s overall well-being. Apparently, exceptional grades are not reliable indicators of emotional well-being. In some cases, teachers or parents assume gifted students are doing well
psychologically because they are making good grades and are “smart.” This is not always the case. Researchers (Cross, 1997; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Silverman, 1993b) call for specialized programming for gifted students and professional development regarding the needs of gifted students. Stakeholders should be knowledgeable about the characteristics and potential social emotional dilemmas of the gifted. This brings attention to the need for educators to be more attuned to the unique experiences of gifted students. The analysis also revealed gifted students did not differ significantly from non-gifted peers in self-esteem, aspects of hope, problem orientation, or attitudes to education. Again, this finding suggests gifted adolescents share common experiences with non-gifted adolescent peers. This highlights the heterogeneity among gifted individuals. Yet it is difficult to extrapolate these findings to the larger gifted population because the sample was taken from only Catholic schools, limiting external validity.

Nonetheless, the results of the social and emotional data in this study suggested that as a group gifted students reported, “More sense of isolation and dissatisfaction with the social support they received and reported higher levels of sadness” (p. 580). The school environment is likely affecting this elevated report of distress among gifted students. To address these concerns, Vialle et al. (2007) concluded with the recommendation that schools identify gifted students and consider grouping them together in some manner and also teach them social skills and stress coping techniques. The study also reveals the misunderstanding people have about the gifted. Again, investigating these experiences may help provide meaningful information to understanding the psychological experiences of gifted students are especially when changing social and academic environments. There is no research to date, that examines the emotional and behavioral changes adolescents’ experience when they face more academic rigor in a new school
Residential Academies

Since gifted adolescents can have unique developmental experiences, it is arguable that many of them require alternative social and academic environments like those found in gifted residential schools. Kolloff (2003) strongly advocated the expansion of residential schools for the gifted because traditional schools may lack the ability to meet their diversified needs. Residential schools offer an alternative in a given state when a student is not satisfied with his or her current schooling. Residential schools can offer a wealth of opportunities for gifted students. Kolloff also cited several benefits of residential schools to the states in which they exist. With twenty residential gifted schools in the U.S., many of them provide telecast advanced courses to nonresidential students in other schools as well as extensive outreach programs. States like North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois and Texas report over 60% of students graduating from these schools go to college within that state (Kolloff, 2003). States establishing these schools helps to preserve gifted individuals’ contributions within each state. Furthermore, these students receive several merit awards, scholarships, and recognitions they would not customarily be able to attain if they remained at their home high schools. These schools reported that over 95% of students that graduate from residential schools go to college (Kolloff, 2003). This rate is likely due to the fact that those who decided to go to a selective school are also motivated to go to college. In addition, the objective of the school is to prepare every student for college and services are set up accordingly. Traditional schools are not likely to provide the same level of intensity for college bound students. These students could get sidetracked in traditional schools if not exposed to a more purposeful social and academic environment.
In Cross and Miller’s (2007) review of residential schools in the U.S., the conclusions of Kolloff (2003) were supported. The information Cross and Miller provided underlined the importance of the residential component as essential to sustaining social needs of the gifted. These special environments provide a sense of affiliation when gifted students would otherwise be perceived as a social anomaly in the traditional school setting. Housing this talented and diverse group in the same environment creates more learning and developmental opportunities for them. Having a supportive and affirming social and academic environment is an essential part of the development of gifted students. As described earlier in Mohaney’s (2007) Identity Formation Model, when students attend a residential school for the gifted, at least three of the systematic needs (e.g., environmental, academic, and social) are being provided to support gifted identity development. In this sense, the Identity Formation Model supports the idea of high ability students enrolling in residential schools for the gifted as a means to effectively establish their identity.

Even so, transitioning into a residential school can be a challenging process. This transition has prompted some skepticism about the benefits of attending a residential school for the gifted because it can be so strenuous. For instance, Plucker and Yecke (1999) found gifted students who moved during high school experienced short-term transitional academic and social difficulties. Smith (2006) examined how negative academic transitions at one point in time can affect later transitions. Specifically, Smith found that high achieving middle school student who experienced achievement loss when transitioning to high school were more likely to leave their first college than high achieving students who did not. Moreover, the results of the study indicated the experience of achievement loss during the transition from middle school to high school was a strong predictor of high-achieving student attrition rates at their first college.
Although Smith indicated high-achieving students were still less likely to leave their first college than non-high-achieving students, the effects of this association are still troubling given these students’ high ability level. Furthermore, the experience of achievement loss during school transitions is analogous to what students may experience when enrolling in a residential school. However, the BFLPE asserts that students are likely to experience a reduction in academic self-concept, but not in academic achievement when transitioning to a high ability selective school. In fact, academic achievements may improve because of the positive effects of upward social comparison. Due to improved academic performance, it is possible that enrolling in a high ability residential school can actually moderate the achievement loss effects initially experienced from middle school to high school. This would suggest that attrition in a student’s first college could be avoided. If this is the case, then a high ability student who has experienced achievement loss may benefit from enrolling a residential school. Although speculative, this may be another justifiable condition to recommend high ability selective schools. Nonetheless, Smith concluded, “The phenomenon of school-to-school transition experiences for high-achieving students needs to be further explored” (p. 218, 2006).

Dunn, Putallaz, Sheppard and Lindstrom (1987) examined how perceived social support helps facilitate adjustment in a residential high school. Using multiple measures, the researchers found perceived social support to be significantly related to adjustment in the school environment. In addition, results indicated the relationship between social support and the student’s gender, the type of adjustment index, and the source of the perceived support moderated adjustment. Perceived family support is related to successful school adjustment. Particularly for males, perceived support in general and from peers is related to successful psychological adjustment. Moreover, male students were more likely than females to seek out
support from peers. Females, on the other hand, were more likely to seek support from guidance counselors when family support was perceived as not available. Kolloff (2003) even noted residential staff must be prepared to assist students as they adjust to living away from home for the first time, adapting to a rigorous curriculum and balancing social, emotional and academic needs in a new community. For the schools, offering various and consistent social programs, peer support groups, visible counselors, faculty, and support staff can do this.

To understand how a residential school may affect these students’ psychological development over time, Cross, Adams, Dixon, and Holland (2004) administered the MMPI-A at the beginning of the students’ school tenure and at the end. Results revealed significant increases on the Depression and Hysteria scales. In particular, subscales showed an elevation in Mental Dullness and Need for Affection may help to explain the cause of the scale elevations for Depression and Hysteria. These results are revealing fatigue because of the academic rigor the students encountered over the two-year period. The increase in Need for Affection may indicate the realization that close friendships developed over the two years could possibly end after graduation. These students were anticipating another transitional period into college, which is likely to generate feelings of increased anxiety or depression. Therefore, it may be more reasonable to conclude that this elevation in Need for Affection was related to anticipation of future transitions than to conclude that the residential school caused it. Nonetheless, residential schools should do more to help students prepare for these transitions. This may involve helping students understand and accept that anxiety and depression are a normal part of their developmental experience during transitions.

Again, even with the increases on the scales, the scores did not enter into a clinical range. The researchers also note the MMPI-A for this gifted group was similar to their non-gifted peers.
This finding was important to quiet the notion that gifted individuals are again psychologically different from the non-gifted. Based on these findings, gifted adolescents appear to have more within-group differences than differences with non-gifted adolescents. Further analysis was conducted on this data specifically to investigate if there are significant differences between gifted adolescents and the general population (Cross, Cassady, Dixon & Adams, 2008). Researchers found small ($d = .20-.49$) to medium ($d = .50-.79$) effect sizes on the MMPI-A content scales between the two groups. Differences revealed using this instrument did not indicate any meaningful psychological distinction of the gifted from the non-gifted population. However, using the MMPI-A in this fashion may not be ideal because it is fundamentally designed as a clinical diagnostic assessment used in individual treatment planning rather than as a comparative research instrument. One should not presume there are psychological differences by searching out the presence or absence of mental disorder. If anything, these findings support Neihart’s (1999) inferences that giftedness does not induce pathology or maladjustment. In fact, they give more support to the idea that academic and social environment can significantly impact the individual student. It is apparent students will experience some form of adjustment issues when entering into a new and challenging academic setting. There is a need to have a better understanding of these changes so appropriate services are in place to help these students adapt socially, academically and emotionally. If these services are provided methodically, then students will be able to truly reap the benefits of attending a residential school. Again, further study of this topic will help speak to the debates regarding BFLP and the efficacy of residential schools as a service option for gifted students.
Summary

The potential of an individual is not detached from the environment in which he or she is developing. Potential growth is intricately connected to the systems surrounding the individual. The individual is in a steady tussle with the environment as potential is continually developed over time. What happens when the environment is not generating provisions to meet the demands of the individual? Likely, the individual is limited in his or her progression unless he or she has an opportunity to change environments. It may be a necessary change for those individuals who possess high abilities and potentials when their needs exceed what is available to them in traditional schools. When students’ social and academic needs are not being met, this is when immersing them into a residential environment may be ideal. Here, the student can be stretched cognitively and emotionally to promote potential development, while otherwise this potential may stagnate during this critical period of adolescence.

Cross (2004) presented the notion that gifted needs or issues are most likely a product of the interaction a student has in relation to his or her environment. These issues emerge due to the lack of something (e.g. socially or academically) or as demands are being placed on him or her within the environment. In the residential school, new demands are being introduced to the students and they should have ready access to the supports and resources they need to adapt to these demands. If some provision is not accessible, then various issues (e.g., depression, feelings of isolation, maladaptive perfectionism, underachievement, misconduct, etc.) can arise. In addition, Cross (2004) explained there are no “omnibus needs” (p.15) which all gifted individuals have. In other words, gifted individuals are unique and come from different cultures and environments; therefore the presenting issues or needs among the gifted are different.
As a diverse group, the gifted can present varied demands on the academic environment as well. A residential school is a unique institution because it has the potential to make these adaptations for the students. At a residential school, the academic and residential aspects are interconnected, which permits more coherence in the environment, making it more responsive to the needs of the students. Since these schools are designed for gifted students, the objective of this study was to examine occurring psychological changes students experience during this interaction with school. It is vital to understand these social and academic dynamics to ensure that the student is experiencing ample supports, helpful transitioning, sustained achievement, and affirming social interactions.

The academic and social contexts should be thoroughly evaluated when making decisions about the type of school gifted students should attend. Are gifted students being served appropriately in their respective school environments? How well are they matched to these environments? In cases of emotional distress, support services should be readily available. Based on the research cited in this review, it is imperative for parents and schools to clearly convey different types of supportive services for their students to reduce adjustment problems. There is a need for heightened awareness about the characteristics and needs of gifted and talented individuals, specifically during adolescence, since this is the period when they can transition to a selective residential high school. Parents, teachers, counselors, and school administrators need to be more informed about the characteristics of gifted students. For instance, they should know about the student’s overall affect (positive or negative), locus of control, need for affiliation, willingness to seek help and type of academic abilities. This understanding will allow them to establish more effective interventions and educational objectives designed to promote healthy development. Secondly, there is a need to understand the holistic effect selective residential high
schools have on students even beyond academic self-concept. A variety of adjustment issues can emerge in the form of anxiety, depression and behavior problems. A well intentioned parent or teacher may decide (or not decide) to enroll a student in a high ability program without fully understanding the effects it may have on the gifted child; understanding the disposition of the child is primary. Even the enthusiastic student may not fully comprehend the requirements of attending a gifted academy and how it might affect him or her. Once the student decides to participate in a residential school, he or she later may feel trapped when they have difficulty performing. Uninformed parents may encourage their child to remain in the school not recognizing the experience is emotionally difficult for the student. To assume that a student will thrive in a residential school because they have been identified as gifted is drastically shortsighted. However, by not making these schools available, students with great potential may become deflated because they are not being positively reinforced socially or academically in traditional school settings. Instead of making drastic decisions that could affect the overall well-being of a student, a student would be better served if a school environmental match can be established to accommodate the needs of the student as suggested by the SCG (Cross & Coleman, 2005). This can be attained by generating more empirical research about the psychological experiences of gifted students within the school.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to better understand the psychological and behavioral changes gifted students experience while attending a residential school. The investigator was examining how students respond to a rigorous academic experience at a residential school for high ability students. In psychotherapy, an objective is to provide growth-promoting engagements using various therapeutic techniques that elicit positive cognition and emotional expression (Cannon, 2008). In this study, the high ability residential school is being conceptualized as a “type of therapy” or “treatment” that provides meaningful social, emotional and cognitive experiences intended to positively develop the students during their tenure at the school. The primary research question was, “What perceived psychological and behavioral changes do gifted students experience at a residential school?” With this directive in mind, the researcher sought to understand the psychological experience of students as they adapt to the school.

Participants

This study used archival data collected over the course of one academic year from students who attended a residential high school for the gifted and talented in the Midwestern United States. The sample included junior and senior students who completed the Y-OQ-SR 2.0 (Wells, M., Burlingame, G. & Rose, P., 2003). The ages of the students ranged from 15 to 18 years old. At the time of the data collection, the racial identification of the combined classes was as follows: 8% African American, 11% Asian American, 2% Hispanic, 72% Caucasian, and 7% other. The students come from various counties and high schools throughout the state. At the
beginning of the school year the student count was 294 (125 seniors [81 females and 44 males], 170 juniors [99 females and 71 males]); by the end of the school year the number reduced by the end of the school year to 269 (119 seniors [77 females and 42 males], 150 juniors [88 females, 62 males]). The reasons for the reduction in class count included students withdrawing because of problems adjusting (e.g. homesickness), academic difficulties, behavior problems, or a personal decision. The school has incorporated several support services (i.e. guidance services, college and career counseling, group and individual mental health counseling, tutoring programs, etc.) that have increased student retention. Despite some students withdrawing, the school seeks to help every student graduate and successfully transition to college.

Setting

The data were collected from a state-supported selective residential high school for juniors and seniors located on a mid-sized college campus in the Midwest. Students pay a partial fee to offset residential costs. Financial aid is available for those who qualify. Students apply to the school during the sophomore year from their home high school. Students submit an application that includes transcripts, teacher recommendations, Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, and student essays expressing their desire to enroll and explaining their ability to adapt to the school’s challenges. Selected professional staff and teachers assess a student’s readiness and ability to adapt to the rigorous curriculum review the students’ applications. In some cases, students are requested to participate in interviews to gather further information. Throughout this process, teachers, counselors, administrators and parents are encouraged to express input about the acceptability of the student while reviewing the applications. Application items are put into a rubric. Based on the information submitted, a rating is assigned to categories that include GPA, SAT score, guidance rating of class rank and curriculum, recommendations, student interest in
the school/community involvement, and non-cognitive indicators. These scores are used to
generate a composite score. This rubric score aids in quantifying the student’s likelihood to
succeed at the school. The school admits up to approximately 160 students for its junior class
yielding a total school enrollment of 300. During the year of the data collection, the average
SAT/ACT scores for the senior class were 1882/27.6. The average SAT/ACT scores for the
junior class were 1749/25.9. Admitted students leave home early and move into a coed-
dormitory similar to attending college. Separate floors are assigned to male and female students.
All incoming students are administered the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, the Youth
Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report, the About My Life Survey (a suicidal screening), and a
social coping survey. The on-staff mental health counselor reviews these surveys. For students
that indicate suicidal risk, counseling appointments are set for further assessment. The Myers-
Brigg Personality Inventory is useful as an in-school research tool and for roommate
assignments. Students have access to a variety of support services including peer tutoring,
individual and group counseling, psycho-educational programs, career counseling, college
counseling, guidance and advising services, and nursing staff. In addition, every student is
provided a laptop computer with wireless internet access to complete homework assignments and
other personal activities. They can also participate in extracurricular activities such as band,
choir, theater, visual arts, and athletic teams with a neighboring high school. The students can
also join and establish clubs based on their individual interests. Students can acquire additional
privileges such as extended curfews by demonstrating positive behavior and achievement.
Furthermore, if students fail to meet social and academic standards, they can lose privileges,
incur groundings, be assigned to mandatory study hall or even be suspended for a period of time.
The classes offer college level course work and include advanced placement courses. Students can also choose to take a variety of courses for college credit from the local state university. All students graduate with an academic honors diploma. All instructors at the school have an advanced degree with approximately 30 to 40% holding a doctoral degree. The student teacher ratio is approximately 9 to 1. In addition to completing classes for graduation, students also must complete 30 community service hours and school services hours, and accumulate a set number of social programming hours referred to as “wellness” in order to receive a diploma. The school does not maintain a rank class or grade point averages for the students.

**Procedure**

With permission of the executive co-directors of the school, this research used archival data collected from the students by the school. Students were administered the Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report 2.0 (YOQ-SR) five times over the course of an academic year. The YOQ-SR was used to gather information about the emotional and social experiences at the school to help improve the support services provided for the students. The instrument was administered at purposeful times to capture the most meaningful yet accommodating time periods for the students. The first administration was given at the beginning of the school year prior to the start of the classes. The instrument was given to both juniors and seniors at the same time. This first administration represents the base line, since students have not been fully immersed in the academic residential environment for that year. At that point, the juniors had gone through a three-day orientation and the seniors had returned for approximately one day prior to taking the instrument. The returning seniors had completed a year at the school and were returning from the summer break. The questionnaire instructed students to respond to the items
in respect to the past seven days. All students present at the school were expected to take this first administration. The subsequent administrations were voluntary.

The second administration was given approximately two months later. This administration was set one week prior to midterms to capture the students’ status at the midpoint of the semester and to increase the likelihood students would have time to take the instrument. The questionnaire was made available on two consecutive days during a time called “face check.” Face check is a daily 30-minute period when each student is required to check in with his or her respective Student Life Counselor (SLC) in the evening. A SLC is staff personnel who supervises the students and also lives in the residence hall. The students were notified by email that the instrument would be made available during face check and their participation was voluntary. The SLCs permitted students to take the instrument only during the appointed time and did not permit the students to take the instrument to their personal room to complete. The third administration was given approximately 2 months after the second in mid-November. It also was made available on the two consecutive days during face checks. The same method of administration was used each subsequent time to help reduce error in the data collection.

The fourth and fifth administrations were similar to the second and third. The fourth was given prior to the midterm during the second semester and the fifth was given before the finals period during face check on two consecutive days. The purpose of this organization of administration was to ensure student responses were most reflective of experiences while at school and not a home. The school schedules the students to go home for extended weekends (i.e. 3 or more days) approximately every 5 to 6 weeks. Considering the time periods, the school wanted to ensure sufficient time had passed between administrations and that the times were consistent. Also, the manner in which the YOQ-SR was administered during face check was
intended to be as unobtrusive as possible by making it available during a regularly scheduled event. The students reported their gender and year in school when completing the questionnaire. As an incentive for taking the questionnaire all five times, students were entered into a drawing to win various prizes. The names of the students were recorded for the drawing but not in the analysis of the data.

**Instrumentation**

Data from the Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self-Report 2.0 (YOQ-SR) will be used for this study. The YOQ-SR is a 64 item questionnaire comprised of six subscales designed to assess behavioral change for individuals ages 12 to 18 (Wells, M., Burlingame, G. & Rose, P., 2003). This measure is used to assess the self-reported beliefs, attitudes, feelings, moods, and behaviors of adolescents during the previous seven days using a 5-point Likert scale. Unlike diagnostic measures oriented to the measurement of psychopathology such as the MMPI-A, the YOQ-SR is specifically constructed as a progress tracking and outcome measurement device that assesses behavior and changes in psychological functioning.

The original development of the outcome measure was based on the needs of two perspectives: (1) the needs of managed care, third party payers, and accrediting agencies for quality indicators; and (2) the needs of the individual providers to track patient progress, incorporating markers of improvement, no change, and deterioration into clinical decision making. These core ideals enable the YOQ-SR to be used for the purposes of tracking and research. Additionally, the Youth Outcome Questionnaire was developed with four primary objectives in mind including: (1) it could be used on a session to session basis to track progress and outcome; (2) it is brief and would take less than 7 minutes to administer; (3) it is sensitive to change over short periods of time; and (4) it is available for a nominal cost. These attributes also
help to complement the needs of the school by reducing cost and time needed to administer the assessment.

The subscales include Intrapersonal Distress (ID), Somatic (S), Interpersonal Relations (IP), Critical Items (CI), Social Problems (SP), and Behavioral Dysfunction (BD). The Intrapersonal Distress (ID) scale assesses change in emotional distress including anxiety, depression, fearfulness, hopelessness, and self-harm. Depression and anxiety were found to be interdependent; therefore no attempt was made to differentiate these symptoms on this instrument.

The Somatic (S) scale assesses change in somatic distress typical in psychiatric presentation, including headaches, dizziness, stomach aches, nausea, bowel difficulties, and pain or weaknesses in joints.

The Interpersonal Relations (IP) scales assess change in the adolescent’s relationship with parents, other adults, and peers as well as their attitude towards others, interaction with friends, aggressiveness, arguing, and defiance.

The Critical Items (CI) scale describes features of adolescents primarily utilizing inpatient services where short-term stabilization is the primary change sought. It assesses change in paranoia, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, hallucinations, delusions, suicide, mania, and eating disorder issues. A high score on this scale is indicative that they may need immediate intervention beyond standard outpatient treatment.

The Social Problems (SP) scale assesses change in problematic behaviors that are socially related, including truancy, sexual problems, running away from home, destruction of property, and substance abuse.
The Behavioral Dysfunction (BD) scale assesses change in an adolescent’s ability to organize tasks, complete assignments, concentrate, and handle frustration, including items on inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

**Scoring**

Scoring the YOQ-SR is a straightforward procedure involving simple addition of item values. Subscales are calculated by adding items that are assigned to each category. The total score is summation of item weights from all six scales. Scores can range from -16 to 240, with higher scores indicating more distress for the individual. The instrument may be administered and scored (individually or in groups) by nonclinical personnel; however, a licensure had to be acquired by the school from the distributor in order to use the instrument. Responses are scored as follows: Never or Almost Never (0), Rarely (1), Sometimes (2), Frequently (3), and Almost Always or Always (4). The instructions indicate those completing the measure should respond to every statement. Seven items are written and reverse scored to assess healthy development and help ensure the instrument was completed properly. The raw scores for these items are scored as 2, 1, 0, -1, or -2.

According to the administration and scoring manual, the cut-off scores for the YOQ-SR and subscales are as follows: Total: 47; Intrapersonal Distress: 17; Somatic: 6; Interpersonal Relations: 3; Social Problems: 3; Behavior Dysfunction: 11; and Critical Items 6. Scores above the cut-off are indicative of difficulty or reason for concern. In addition to the cutoff scores for assessing patient change, the Reliable Change Index (RCI) can be used to determine the significance of change. Patients who change in a positive or negative direction by at least 18 points are regarded as having made a reliable change; i.e. their change exceeds measurement error. The RCI’s for the total score and subscale scores are as follows: Total: 18; Intrapersonal
Distress: 9; Somatic 6; Interpersonal Relations: 6; Social Problems: 5; Behavior Dysfunction: 12; and Critical Items: 6. Calculations for the cut-off scores and the RCI are based on calculations from Jacobsen and Traux (1991).

**Reliability and Validity**

In the manual (Wells, Burlingame, & Rose, 2003), the developers indicated reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha with the entire sample of adolescents (N = 1,334) across four sample groups (i.e., residential, outpatient, partial hospital, and community). They indicated the Total Score reliability estimate was .96 across all groups. Reliability coefficient estimates were reported to be: Total Score, .96; Intrapersonal Distress, .91; Somatic, .73; Interpersonal Relations, .77; Social Problems, .84; Behavior Dysfunction, .78; and Critical Items, .81. It is possible these high estimates could be the result of the similarity of item content. The authors also indicated that such high reliability coefficients are indicative of a "strong single factor underlying the several subscales of the questionnaire" (Wells, Burlingame, & Rose, p. 11, 2003). However, this is not likely as no statistical evidence for this was provided in the manual. Furthermore, no validity evidence was presented in the manual.

The sensitivity of the YOQ-SR was reported as .66, meaning that two-thirds of the clinical sample would be identified as a “true positive” when utilizing the cut-off score of 46. The specificity or the proportion of “true negatives” correctly identified is .74, meaning, 74% of the community normal sample had scores that fell below the cut-off score of 46. However, no information was provided as to exactly how these values were obtained. The instrument has been normed across the four different adolescent sample groups listed in Table 1 (p. 56).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>61.22</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>67.07</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Hospital</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>65.29</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>34.21</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 1, there are only small differences on the total YOQ-SR between the three clinical groups (e.g. partial hospital, outpatient and residential). The community normal (untreated) sample was significantly below that of the clinical groups, F (3, 1333) = 61.1, p<.0001. Reliable differences do not appear between the clinical groups.

In order to test for reliability, test-retest reliability coefficients were generated for a community youth sample (N=111). No significant differences were reported from the initial administration to the second (t = 1.539, p = .127) over a period of 27 days. Overall, the results indicated significantly high test-retest correlations for the total score (r=.89, p <.001) and the subscales ranged from .68 to .86, suggesting good reliability (Wells, Burlingame, & Rose, 2003).

Other researchers have investigated the reliability and validity of the instrument as well (Ridge, 2007; Harrison, 2007). Ridge (2007) reported internal consistency for the Total Score to exceed .95, which is consistent with the report in the manual. The study also found the test-retest
reliability coefficients ranged between .68 to .86 for subscales and .89 for the Total Score, suggesting “moderately high temporal stability” (p. 94). Harrison (2007) reported the internal consistency estimate as .94 and test-retest reliability coefficient of .84 for the YOQ-SR Total Score. These results help increase confidence in clinical and practical applications and that the instrument is measuring changes in the adolescent consistently.

To examine concurrent validity the YOQ-SR was administered along with the Behavior Assessment System for Children- Self-Report of Personality (BASC-2 SRP-A) and the Child Behavior Checklist Youth Self Report (CBCL-YSR) (Ridge, 2007). Pearson Product Moment Correlation was calculated between the YOQ-SR subscales proposed in the original six-factor model and the BASC-2 SRP-A and CBCL YSR subscales. The YOQ-SR correlated highest with the CBCL YSR on the total problems scale (r = 0.83). Correlations between similar constructs ranged from 0.61 and 0.83l, suggesting moderate to high subscale convergent validity.

Convergent validity was assessed by noting moderate to high correlations between conceptual subscales between the YOQ-SR subscales and criterion subscales as measured by the BASC-2 SRP-A and CBCL YSR. Using t-test for non-independent correlations assessed divergent validity. The YOQ-SR subscales and the predicted criterion subscales were compared with the correlations with the non-criterion subscales (Ridge, 2007).

Using exploratory factor analysis and modified indices generated eight homogeneous subscales which improved the model fit over the proposed six (Ridge, 2007). The symptom clusters generated were similar to the constructs on the BASC-2 SRP-A and CBCL-YSR, adding support to the construct validity of the YOQ-SR. Overall, the analysis supported the usage of the YOQ-SR as a multifactor, non-higher order measure for adolescent self-report assessment. The
findings generated acceptable levels of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and concurrent validity.

To examine the differences in adolescent responses based on demographic variables including age group, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic performance, native status (U.S. or foreign-born), acculturation, and religious group affiliation status on the YOQ-SR subscales and Total Score, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) analysis was performed, with follow-up ANOVAs and t-tests used to determine the presence of significant differences within the sample (Harrison, 2007). Significant main effects were found for age group, gender, academic performance, and religious group affiliation. For age group, the differences indicated that 18-year olds reported more behavioral concerns than 12-14 year olds. Gender differences were related to the type of concerns reported. Females reported higher levels of emotional distress and physical concerns, whereas, males reported higher levels of social, behavioral and aggressive problems. The findings related to religious affiliation were described as “preliminary” due to limited information collected within the sample. The most interesting finding with the YOQ-SR, especially as it pertains to this study, with the YOQ-SR is the difference found related to academic performance. According to Harrison (2007), academic performance accounted for more variability in the YOQ-SR (9.6%) scores than any other explanatory variable. The outcome in this study will be of particular interest considering the participants are generally high achieving students now transitioned into a more rigorous academic environment. The change in academic demand tends to impact grades for students.

No significant effects were found with ethnicity, socioeconomic status, native status, or acculturation. Harrison (2007) found ethnicity actually accounted for the smallest portion of
variability in YOQ-SR (1.9%) scores. Therefore, there is evidence to support the notion that the YOQ-SR can be used with little concern for cultural bias.

**Data Analysis**

The intent of this study was to answer the following question: What perceived psychological and behavior changes do gifted students experience at a residential school? To address the question regarding change over time, the researcher analyzed the scores using Latent Growth Curve Modeling (LGM; see fig. 1). LGM is a Structure Equation Model (SEM) based approach that treats the change over time (slope) and the starting place (intercept) as latent variables (Brown, Catalano, Fleming, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2005; Farrell & Sullivan, 2004). Repeated Measures (RM) ANOVA only allows you to compare means of participants’ overtime, comparing means from one time to the next. LGM characterizes growth in terms of its rate over time, rather than as a difference in means. So, while RM ANOVA helps you determine whether there are differences in means from one time to the next, LGM will tell you how much the typical score changes over a given unit of time (Duncan, Duncan, Strycker, Li & Alpert, 1999).

Using the five data collection periods, the researcher examined the pattern of linear and/or quadratic change (i.e., improvement, deterioration, or no change) over time. In example the model (fig.1), the “Total Score” abbreviated as ts1, ts2, ts3, ts4 and ts5 are the observable variables or scores on the YOQ-SR for each administration (note: e1 thru e5 are the error for each administration). The initial administration represents the baseline labeled as “Intercept.” The following administrations assessed change over time labeled as “Slope” in the example model. In addition to tracking change in Total Score, the researcher also is able to track changes on the individual subscales and correlations in change among the various measures. A similar
model was created for each of the subscales. The “Quadratic” variable was added to determine if the changes over time in scores were curvilinear rather than linear.

Furthermore, LGM allowed the researcher to incorporate a Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model wherein the researcher can use another observable variable such as gender or year in school to predict changes in the latent variable similar to linear regression, which RM ANOVA cannot do. By incorporating the MIMIC model into LGM, the researcher was able to see if changes occurred at the same degree for juniors and seniors or males and females. The MIMIC model allowed the researcher to use one or more observed variables to predict a latent variable in a manner similar to linear regression. By adding year in school as an observed variable to the model, the researcher could see if this variable significantly predicts the rate of change on outcomes scores. This was represented in the example model by adding variable label as “Class.” A tentative diagram of the LGM model with MIMIC is provided in Model 0.
Model 0

Example LGM with Quadratic and MIMIC Variables

Regarding comparisons to other samples (community, partial hospital, outpatient, and residential), all of the data collected in the initial administration (N = 272) was analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The scores of this analysis was compared to the groups norms reported in the YOQ-SR 2.0 manual. The implications were discussed to understand the psychological and behavioral traits as they begin the school year in comparison to sample used to develop the instrument.
Qualitative Data

To complement the archival data utilized for the proposed study, the researcher incorporated a qualitative element to the study. The qualitative element added insight and integrity to the overall study by addressing the primary research question more fully. The researcher incorporated in-depth interviews to gain an emic perspective and give voice to the students at the residential school (Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Conducting in-depth interviews enriched the quantitative data gathered with the YOQ-SR. The interviews permitted students to expand on their respective experiences and personally attest to the influences the school had on their development. Without this additional information, we are left to assume that changes in YOQ-SR scores are related to the school environment. Thus, it was possible to argue that the changes in scores occur naturally overtime or are unrelated to the school. This additional approach lessened these opposing views. The interviews provided further rationale for the effects residential schools have on gifted students. In combination, quantitative and qualitative, this study allows for a more sound understanding of the adjustment experiences of students at residential schools.

The researcher used a phenomenological approach to conduct the interviews. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), phenomenological interviewing is a specific type of in-depth interview that assumes that there is a structure and essence to a shared experience that can be narrated. “The purpose of this type of interviewing is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). In this case, these individuals are gifted students and the shared phenomenon was attending a residential school. The researcher sought to understand the shared experience gifted students have at the school. Furthermore, the researcher wants to appreciate the ways this experience transforms the
students psychologically and in their conduct. Using the in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to see, describe and narrate the students’ perspective by meticulously assembling the data gathered.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), “The primary advantage of phenomenological interviewing is that it permits an explicit focus on the researcher’s personal experience combined with those of the interviewees” (p.105). This approach seemed most appropriate given the nature of the researcher’s interests and involvement with the school and also best served the purpose of study with the available quantitative data. The interviews were structured based on Seidman’s (1998) description of phenomenological inquiry. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher wrote a description of their own experiences with the phenomenon of interest and bracketed it off from those of the interviewees (i.e. provided at the beginning of Chapter 1). This phase of the inquiry was referred to as *epoche* (see Chapter 1; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Moustakas, 1994). Self-examination permits the interviewer to separate and clarify preconceived notions and biases about the phenomenon. Self-examination is considered an ongoing process (Patton, 2002). The actual interviews were a compilation of the interviewees past and present experiences with the phenomenon. These narratives are then combined to form the individuals’ essential experience with the phenomenon. The essence of the phenomenon was formed in a process called *phenomenological reduction*. Here, the researcher clusters the data based on themes and describes the textural language (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The final stage, known as *structural synthesis*, involved an exploration of all possible meanings and perspectives that generated a full description of the essence of the phenomenon. In this study, the process also described changes discovered within the quantitative data.
The questioning was informed by a flexible topic guide informed by the five-step method for phenomenological data collection described by Crotty (1998). The steps are as follows:

1. Precise delineation of the phenomenon of interest
2. Precise consideration of the phenomenon
3. Precise description of what comes into view
4. Preservation of the phenomenological character of the description
5. Description of the essence of the phenomenon

Phenomenological interviews are characteristically unstructured and open-ended; more like an in-depth conversation than a formal interview (Dale, 1996; Crotty, 1998). In order to provide focus for the interview, a topic of interest must be identified (Dale, 1996). The qualitative component was aimed at more fully answering the primary research question of interest: “What perceived psychological and behavioral changes do students experience by attending a residential school”? Here, the main components of this question are “what” “changes” “experience” and “residential school.” The word “what” marked clear request for information about the degree to which the phenomenon is being experienced and denotes the researcher’s openness to whatever might be shared during the interview. The use of “changes” reffered to whatever transformations the student believes he or she has undergone while at the school. The word “perceived” was used emphasized the student’s perspective. These “changes” are being specified by “psychological” and “behavioral.” The word “experience” indicates the researcher’s seeking of the students’ personal stories about the phenomenon. The terms “residential school” provided the context wherein the changes are experienced. It was the interaction between the student and school that manifests the essence of the phenomenon. This primary question serves as an introduction to frame the purpose of the interview.
The interviews are comprised of a few meaningful open-ended questions that address the primary research question. These questions were derived from the primary research question and in considerations of ideas related to BFLP (i.e. social comparison, academic self-concept and adjustment). The objective of the interviewer was to understand the phenomenon from the point of view of the participant. The participants are prompted with the following example queries:

1. Tell me about how being at the Academy has affected you.
2. Remember a time when you were stressed at the Academy. What were you aware of at that time?
3. Remember a time when you were doing well at the Academy. What were you aware of at that time?
4. What inspired you to come to the Academy and how have you felt fulfilled and/or unfulfilled during your time at the school?
5. In what ways do you believe you would be different if you had not come to the Academy?
6. How do you feel you compare to your peers at this school?
7. How have these comparisons affected your academic performance?

From these points, the dialogue continued as the interviewer explored a fuller understanding based on participant responses (See Appendix C). During this process, the interviewer was careful not to lead the participant in a direction they would not go themselves while describing the phenomenon (Dale, 1998). Furthermore, the interviewer was open to new ideas and perspectives about the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This permitted the participant to present a pure representation of the phenomenon. During analysis, this also allowed to the researcher to
ensure that themes arose from the data provided and not from interviewer impositions (Crotty, 1998).

An important criterion for selecting the method of data analysis for the study was that it should capture and preserve the phenomena experienced (Giorgi, 2006). Moustakas’ (1994) modification of Van Kaam’s method of phenomenological data analysis met this criterion using seven stages.

1. **Listing and preliminary grouping of meaningful statements.** Here, every expression relevant to the experience is listed. Each of the statements is regarded as having equal value in understanding how the school has affected the student.

2. **Reduction and elimination** to determine invariant constituents. These invariant constituents are the stable meaning units that give substance to the phenomenon. These are sorted out or tested by two questions 1. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is necessary for understanding? 2. Can you extract and label it? If so, is it on the level of the experience. If not, it is eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive and vague expressions are also eliminated. Those remaining are identified as the invariant constituents.

3. **Clustering and Thematizing of Invariant Constituents.** Next, the invariant constituents are then clustered into a thematic label. These represent the core themes of the experience of the school.

4. **Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application Validation.** The invariant constituents and respective themes are then compared against the complete report of the participant. The researcher takes note whether they are expressed explicitly in the complete transcription and/or are compatible with the student report if they are not explicitly expressed. If they are not explicit or compatible then they are removed.
5. *Individual Textural Description.* Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, they are constructed in textural description that provides the precise nature and focus of the phenomenon (e.g. “the what”).

6. *Individual Structural Description.* Using the same information a structural description is created; giving an account of the subjective experience (e.g. “the how and why”) of the phenomenon for the students.

7. *Textural-structural description.* For each student a textural/structural description is provided of the meanings and essences of the experiences that incorporate the invariant constituents and themes.

The descriptions were cross-compared for individual differences and similarities among students (See Appendix D). Moustakas’ final step involved an integration of the objective and the subjective, as represented by the textural-structural accounts. The intention was to obtain a textural-structural description, “a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). This composite description created the narrative by providing the overall essence of the phenomenon following the reflective study of themes found in participant interviews by the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

The participants for the interviews were pooled from students who completed the initial administration of the YOQ-SR during their junior year \((N = 160, \ M = 32.55 \pm 24.25)\). These student participants would now be in their senior year at the school. Therefore, they have both a past and present experience with the school. The researcher conducted nine interviews. The interviewees are divided across three subgroups based on their initial Total Scores on the YOQ-SR. The subgroups are low-range (-15 to 22), mid-range (23 to 46), and high-range (47 to 110) scorers. Higher scores represent higher levels of distress. Based on the summing all 64 items,
YOQ-SR scores can potentially range for -16 to 240 (Wells, Burlingame & Rose, 2003). The interviewee subgroups are based on the instruments’ cut-off score of 47 that distinguishes clinical levels from normal levels of behavior. Based on the data collected 25% of the incoming juniors who took the instrument scored within the clinical range on the YOQ-SR (i.e. 47 and above). The remaining participants were divided approximately in half to distinguish the low-range from mid-range scorers. Three voluntary participants were interviewed from each subgroup for a total of nine students. Nine students were sufficient to avoid oversaturation of the information gathered. The individual interviews were digitally audio taped and were approximately 30 minutes in length. Each of the interviews was professionally transcribed.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter provides information about how a group of academically gifted students were affected by attending a residential school. The results of this study include both quantitative and qualitative data. Analyses are discussed separately to provide an overview of the findings. The quantitative component included an analysis of the archival data collected with the YOQ-SR over a one-year period. Descriptive information was provided about the baseline incoming scores of the student. The scores were also examined longitudinally over the course of the year to track changes in their scores. As a point of interest, comparisons were made with gender (male vs. female) and class (junior vs. senior) to track noticeable differences between groups.

The qualitative portion included information from the interviews with nine students. Textural descriptions from each student with specific quotes were used to illustrate salient points about their experience at the academy. The interview transcripts were reduced to reveal common themes across the interviews and were used to highlight the quantitative results. All the interviewees were seniors at the school and also completed the YOQ-SR throughout their junior year. The interviews were completed during the latter half of their first semester as a senior (October- November). In the process of coding the interviews, participants’ comments were classified into 4 broad themes that pertained to the experience of adapting to the residential school. These categories included: 1. Psychological Change; 2. Academic Adjustment; 3. Social Adjustment; and 4. Social Comparison. Descriptions of each theme were also included to provide detail of how the interviews were reduced (See Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8).
Descriptive Data

The first portion of this analysis provided a description of the initial data collected with the YOQ-SR. This initial data was collected from students at the beginning of the school year ($N = 272$). This sample was made up of 104 males and 168 females; 161 juniors and 111 seniors. The description provided information about the baseline YOQ-SR Total Scores and subscale scores (Table 1). The YOQ-SR Total Score (TS) functions as a self-report indicator of the level of psychological distress an adolescent is experiencing. Higher scores indicated elevated levels of distress.

According to the YOQ-SR scoring manual (Wells, Burlingame & Rose, 2003), the initial Total Score (TS1) overall mean from this sample suggests normal levels of psychological distress (overall TS1 $M = 29.04$, $SD = 23.35$, $SE = 1.42$). The manual reports the community normal sample ($N = 512$) Total Score as $M = 34.21$, $SE = 1.31$ (Wells, Burlingame & Rose, 2003). The clinical cut-off for the YOQ-SR Total Score and for the subscales scores are as follows: Total Score (TS): 47; Interpersonal Distress (ID): 17; Somatic (S): 6; Interpersonal Relations (IR): 3; Social Problems (SP): 3; Behavioral Dysfunction (BD): 11; and Critical Items (CI): 6 (Wells, Burlingame & Rose, 2003). Actually, none of the mean scale scores in this sample are at or above the clinical cut-offs for the YOQ-SR. However, the standard deviation for this sample is relatively high ($SD = 23.35$) with a lower standard error ($SE = 1.42$). The high standard deviation reflects a wide range of scores among students. In fact, approximately 22% ($n = 59$) of this sample scored at or above the 47 TS cut-off (Table 1; Fig. 0; Table 1.1). The result indicated a portion of incoming juniors and returning seniors were experiencing psychological distress at levels comparable to clinical groups (i.e. partial hospital, outpatient, and inpatient
samples). Approximately 25% of incoming juniors scored at or above the TS cut-off and 15% of the returning seniors scored at or above the cut-off before the start of the academic year.

**Table 1**

Initial YOQ-SR Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TS1</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>29.04</td>
<td>1.416</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>.241</td>
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<td>-.57</td>
<td>.245</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BD1</td>
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<td>.340</td>
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<tr>
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<td>272</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 0**

Total Score Distribution with Normal Curve
### Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Score Cut-off</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;= 47</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 47</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Class differences

To further investigate trends in the initial data collection, one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the differences in YOQ-SR scores between juniors and seniors. The juniors \((n = 161)\) had significantly higher TS1 at the beginning of the school year than the seniors \((n = 111, \text{ Table 3})\), \(F(1, 270) = 10.37, p < .05\). The results also indicated that juniors had significantly higher scores than the seniors at the beginning of the academic year on ID1, \(F(1, 270) = 4.18, p < .05\) and BD1, \(F(1, 270) = 6.39, p < .05\). Using Levene’s test, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for scales TS1, ID1 and BD1. However, variances indicated heterogeneity for scales S1, IR1, SP1 and CI1. For these scales, Welch’s F was used to correct for the violation of assumed homogeneity (Welch, 1951). There was a significantly higher difference on subscales S1 for juniors Welch’s \(F(1, 257.71) = 20.04, p < .05\) and for CI1 Welch’s \(F(1, 269.71) = 13.28, p < .05\). There was no significant difference in scores between classes on scales IR1 or SP1.
Table 2

ANOVA Analyses of Class Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.001</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>.064</td>
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<tr>
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<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender differences

The one-way ANOVA also generated differences in gender. With homogeneity of variances met, females showed significantly lower scores on the IR1 scale than males $F(1, 270) = 4.50, p < .05$ and higher S1 scale scores $F(1, 270) = 10.470, p < .05$. Using Welch’s F, males were also found to have significantly higher scores on the SP1 scale $F(1, 156.05) = 6.17, p < .05$. 
(see table 3). These findings are somewhat consistent with the YOQ-SR manual. In the normative community sample, females reported higher Somatic (S) subscales and higher Interpersonal Distress (ID); whereas, males reported higher Behavioral Dysfunction (BD) and Social Problem (SP) scales. The results supported a gender difference; within this sample, females report experiencing more somatic symptoms than males. Somatic questions on the YOQ-SR include items such as “I have headaches or feel dizzy” and “I have pain or weakness in muscles or joints.” Males on the other hand, report having more difficulties in relationships with parents, adults, and peers. These items include statements such as “I argue or speak rudely to others” and “I have a hard time trusting friends, family members, or other adults.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>.017</td>
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Latent Growth Curve Model Analysis

The second part of the quantitative analysis focused on data collected on the YOQ-SR over the course of one academic year. This portion of the analysis only included data from individuals who took the instrument at least three times over the course of the year ($n = 134$). For any two missing data points the data was automatically imputed using AMOS. The purpose of this analysis was to provide information about the psychological changes students experience over time based on changes in YOQ-SR scores (Table 4). Figures 1 through 7 provide a visual plot of the changes in means on each subscale. Overall, there appeared to be a general increase in most scale means from the initial baseline. The scale means also appeared to slightly decrease over time. Only the subscales that revealed significant changes overtime are discussed in the results section (i.e., Figure 1-Total Score; Figure 2- Interpersonal Distress; Figure 3- Social Problems; Figure 4- Behavioral Dysfunction). The subscales Interpersonal Relations, Somatic and Critical Items are not discussed because outcome scores did not reveal significant change overtime. However, these subscales were plotted respectively in Figures 5, 6 and 7 to show each subscale’s trend over the five test administrations.

In order to assess the significance of these changes over time, Latent Growth Curve Modeling (LGM) was used. LGM enabled the researcher to compare changes in scores in terms of how much typical scores change by using a baseline over a unit of time. In this case, the unit
of time extended from one test administration to the next, which was approximately every two months over a ten-month period resulting in 5 data points. Since this is a SEM approach, the data was analyzed using AMOS. AMOS allowed for any missing data points to be automatically imputed for those students that did not take the test all five times. Each scale was discussed based on the best model fit (i.e. no change, linear or quadric change) and the significance of any changes over time and respective correlations.

**LGM with Total Score Means**

For the Total Score means, the quadratic model generated the best model fit for the data (see Model 2); meaning, the changes in scores followed a more curvilinear than linear change. The model fit indices for this model were as follows: $\chi^2/(6) = 2.67, p = .01; CFI = .981, TLI = .952, RMSEA = .112$. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) are considered to reflect good fit at values of .95 or greater (Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004). Reasonable fit was also indicated by the $\chi^2/df$ at a value of less than 3 (Carmines & McIver, 1981). The RMSEA value however did not reflect good fit based on acceptable levels of .08 or less (Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004). Nonetheless, with the acceptable levels in the other indices, the quadratic model appears to fit the data the best and was consider sufficient. This curvilinear change also appears to be the more acceptable trend in scores observed in Figure 1; wherein scores appeared to increase then decrease towards the end of the year.

According to estimates in this analysis, the mean of the intercept or baseline score at the beginning of the year for the sample ($n = 134$) was 28.95. The mean growth across all five time periods was 4.40 and the mean quadratic change was -1.041. All of these parameter values are significant ($p < .01$). The positive slope of 4.40 indicates that scores increased over time. The negative quadratic coefficient indicates the curve was shaped like a bell, with scores rising and
then falling. The small coefficient of -1.041 indicates that the curve was not very steep. The slight bell curve is observable in Figure 1. However, only the covariance between the slope and the quadratic parameters are significant ($p < .05$) and negative (-27.23). The corresponding correlation is -.884, which is quite strong. This result suggested that students who experience greater elevations in YOQ-SR scores experience steeper declines in scores. In other words, the more distressed a student becomes then the more dramatic this level reduced over time. For TS, there was no significant correlation between the initial level of distress and growth overtime; meaning, there was no relationship between the students starting point and how much or steep change occurred.

![Figure 1: TS Means](image.png)

**LGM with Intrapersonal Distress Means**

The linear model using LGM best represented the Intrapersonal Distress (ID) subscale. The ID subscale was designed to measure the amount of emotional distress (i.e. anxiety, depression, etc.) experienced by the adolescent. The fit indices for the linear LGM are $\chi^2/(6) =$
2.78, TLI = .937, CFI = .958, RMSEA = .116. These indices are reasonable given the sufficient CFI and χ²/df coefficients. These results worsened with the quadratic model. Therefore, the linear model was deemed most appropriate for this scale change. This trend was observable in the plot of scores in Figure 2.

The estimates of this analysis show a mean intercept of 13.51 at the beginning of the year and a mean growth or slope of .272. Here, only the intercept is found as significant (p < .01). The covariance between the intercept and slope are not shown to be significant or significantly correlated. This trend can be seen in Figure 2. In the chart, it appears there is an initial increase in IR scores from the beginning of the year to the second YOQ-SR administration and then scores level off or even slightly decline. However, the leveling off or slight decline was not significant.
LGM with Social Problem Means

The Social Problem (SP) subscale assesses severe social problematic or anti-social behaviors such as inappropriate sexual behaviors, truancy, vandalism, substance abuse, etc. For example, items include “I steal or lie” and “I cut or skip classes altogether.” The SP results indicated the quadratic model as having better fit, $\chi^2/(6) = 2.40$, TLI = .93, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .103 than a linear model. The CFI and $\chi^2$/df are both at more reasonable level. Chart 3 shows the plot of SP mean scores over time.

The intercept or initial score mean for this sample of students was .511. The growth mean was .131 with a quadratic mean in .005. Here, the intercept mean was significant with a small positive slope and quadratic coefficient. For SP growth in scores over time was small and overall follows a bowl shaped curve, with scores falling and then rising (see Figure 3). The covariance between the slope and quadratic coefficients were negative and significant (.502, $p < .05$). The corresponding correlation was -0.924, which was quite strong. This change was small, but it suggests that a dip in SP scores was deeper for students who had a quicker rise in scores.
LGM with Behavioral Dysfunction Means

The Behavioral Dysfunction (BD) subscale reflects the students’ ability to organize, complete and concentrate on tasks. Items include statements such as “I am disorganized” or I can’t seem to get organized” and “I act without thinking and don’t worry about what will happen.” For the BD subscale, the quadratic model provides the best fit for data over time, $\chi^2/(6) = 2.28$, TLI = .956, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .098. With this subscale, $\chi^2$/df, CFI and TLI all indicate good fit and RMSEA was somewhat improved relative to the other scales. Chart 4 provides an illustration of these scores over time.

For the BD subscale, the estimates indicate the means of the intercept (6.51), slope (1.01) and quadratic coefficients (-.277) are all significant ($p < .01$). The results show a small increase in scores over time. The negative quadratic coefficient score indicates the scores rise and fall over time. The covariance between the slope and quadratic are significant (-1.52, $p < .5$). The corresponding correlation is -0.963. The strong negative correlation between the slope and the quadratic terms indicates that the peak curve was steeper for scores that increase at higher rates. These results indicate that students who reported experiencing more increases in Behavior Dysfunction items also will experience decreases in these scores at more dramatic rates. Nonetheless, the overall low mean quadratic score was small which results in a small curve over time.
LGM with Gender and Class

For this sample, neither gender nor class had a significant impact on the growth trajectory. Once the sample was divided up into groups based on gender or class, there was not
sufficient data to calculate meaningful results between either of the two groups. Nonetheless, based on descriptive data, the researcher was able to generate charts of the gender and class differences overtime. Figure 8 shows that females (Series 2) had higher TS mean scores than males (Series 1) at the beginning of the year and over the course of the year. Although not significant based on LGM, this trend of higher mean TS scores for females remained at a higher level over time. Figure 9 demonstrated a similar trend between juniors and seniors; where juniors (Series 1) maintained slightly higher average score compared to the seniors (Series 2) of the course of year.

![Figure 8: Gender TS Means](image)
Quadratic Model Analysis for Total Score

Model 2 is the Structure Equation Model (SEM) used to represent changes in YOQ-SR Total Scores over the course of the academic year. As shown in the boxes (ts1, ts2, ts3, ts4, ts5), the Total Score data was gathered 5 times. This same model structure was used for each subscale to determine significant change. The encircled E's account for the measurement error at each point of measurement; meaning, some of the variability in the time specified measures of distress is due to error. The ICEPT, SLOPE and Quad are latent variables. The ICEPT (or intercept) tells us the initial level of distress at the beginning of the school year and the SLOPE tells us that rate of change in distress scores over time. The five paths from the ICEPT are fixed at a constant value of one. This establishes the constant or initial level of distress the students would have and to which the slope is compared. The paths from SLOPE are set a 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. Since ts1 is the initial level there has been zero or no growth. The values of 1, 2, 3 and 4 allows for the identification of a linear model growth. The Quad variable was added to account for the nonlinear pattern in score change using constraint values of 0, 2, 4, 8 and 16. The quadratic model
provided better fit indices than the linear model as stated earlier. The parameters associated with the variables account for the mean and variance of each. This study also examined gender and class as predictors of growth over time. However, they were not included in the final report. Stratifying the sample based on gender or class (year in school) only confounded the results because the divided groups of students were not large enough for analysis.

Model 2

Example of Total Score LGM with Quadratic Variable
### CMIN

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### RMSEA

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**Qualitative Results**

Using phenomenological interviews with nine students, the researcher sought to capture a more detailed representation of how students were affected by attending the residential school. The researcher analyzed verbatim transcripts of all nine interviewees to determine significant invariant meanings about their respective experiences. Following Moustakas’ modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data (Moustaka, 1994), the transcripts were reduced to reveal 27 invariant constituents that highlighted the qualities of attending a residential school for gifted students. The invariant constituents were clustered into four emerging themes.

1. *Psychological Change.* This theme encompasses meaningful expressions of change in the way students think, feel or behave after enrolling in the school.

2. *Academic Adjustment.* This category entails student expressions involving academic adaptations made by students’ to keep up with the coursework and reactions to teachers.

3. *Social Adjustment.* Here, students’ social and interpersonal relationship experiences were clustered together. They described the dynamics of peer relations and how they integrated the social environment into demands of school.

4. *Social Comparison.* This theme involves reports of how students perceive their peers and how these perceptions affected self-concept or behavior. Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 provide descriptions of how the interview data was reduced into themes using example quotes to demonstrate each constituent.

**Interview Participants**

The interview participants for this study were sampled from a group of students in their senior year attending a residential school for the academically gifted. Students volunteered and were invited to interview based on their ability to obtain parental consent and their initial YOQ-SR score. To capture a wider range of psychological functioning and reduce the degree of homogeneity, the researcher interviewed students who reported low range, mid-range and high-
range YOQ-SR scores at the beginning of their junior year. Three students were identified from each range for a total of nine interviewees. Their scores ranged from 2 to 77 ($M = 36.67, SD = 28.03$). The participants also provided a YOQ-SR score during their final semester as a senior. These scores ranged from -6 to 77 ($M = 34.44, SD = 30.26$). Using the Reliable Change Index (RCI) in the YOQ-SR manual, three of the nine interview participants showed significant decreases, one increased significantly and the remaining five showed no reliable change when comparing initial and last scores. The one interviewee who had a significant increase in TS score (i.e. John) did not reach a clinical level. The student also reported having unresolved peer conflict from his junior to senior year, which may have elevated his overall score. The interview participants included 3 males and 6 females. Eight of the students were Caucasian and one was biracial (Hispanic/Caucasian). The ages of the participants were 16 to 18 years old.

Student reported different manifestations of the invariant constituents (i.e. both positive and negative). However, each student reported the themes as part of a shared experience at the academy. A textural/structural description from each interviewee is provided to expand on their experiences. In addition, the participants’ initial YOQ-SR Total Score was reported in the description as well as a Total Score assessed during their final semester as a senior (February).

**John (a)**

John is an 18 year-old Caucasian male. His YOQ-SR Total Score at the beginning of his junior year was 2 and increased to 36 during the last semester of his senior year. He reported he came to the Academy because he “needed something more.” He explained he was not challenged at his former school. When asked what word describes his overall experience at the Academy he said, “Self-growth.”
**Psychological change.**

The psychological experience of the Academy for John can be characterized as cognitive expansion. He explains there was a lack of intellectual stimulation at his former school. He found the more analytical approach to the coursework at the Academy enabled him to examine his personal life with breadth. He stated, “It [the Academy] has broadened the way I think.” He said, “The only way I can explain by going this route is that my mind is just opened up more.” This opening up was described as a mental process that was induced by exposure to this new environment. In addition, it helped him expand his horizons and become more thoughtful about his future aspirations. He said, “It’s kind of removed the boundaries by adding more knowledge.” He explained,

“I’ve actually put some more thought into what I want to do later on. Where if I stayed at my old school I would probably be like, yeah I kind of just want to stick with my engineering idea but I’m not sure how far I want to go with it. Where, here, I’ve actually like talked with people and I’ve gotten ideas and then, like I’ve seriously just spent like a lot of time…thinking. If I could do it, if I could go here, do all this work at school…take what I’ve learned from there [the Academy] and start applying it to something new. Just like start thinking about how it can all work out.”

According to John, if he had not come to the Academy, psychologically, he would have not considered his life goals so broadly. Nonetheless, this expansion did not come without the experience of some adversity. He explained when he first came to Academy, “It was like being thrown into the lion’s den.” This frightening description stems from entering into an unknown territory placing new mental and physical demands on him. He reported at the start of his junior year he did not know what to do or think. He explained he felt hurried coming into the Academy;
getting moved in during orientation, scheduling classes, getting supplies for his room, etc. He said, “The first couple of weeks were just basically…wrapping my mind around things.” John also reflected on the psychological experience of facing a heavy workload during his first finals week. He reported he went without sleep and overloaded on caffeine while he tried to finish his work as well as helping his peers. He reflected, “Yeah, it was crazy is the best way to explain it. The mindset was a little overactive.” He gave an account of working without sleep for almost 48 hours. After enduring these experiences, John noticed changes in his ability to cope from his junior year to his senior. He said, “Especially this year, it seems like when things kind of go well, it’s just, you finally take a step back and um, kick back and relax, go and play like out on the playground with friends or whatever. “ Psychologically, John experienced this environment in a way that challenged him to grow and adapt. Although he is the same individual, the experience of the Academy has enhanced his sense of self and his ability to cope with stress.

**Academic adjustment.**

Academics were a critical part of transforming how John sees the world around him. He was appreciative of how the Academy’s faculty challenged him by getting deeper into the academic material. He stated, “We’ll discuss what we think and why we think this caused this, or how it all worked together.” At his former school he said he was not challenged and filled his time by helping seniors with their work and doing odd jobs around the school. He said, “It was just dull, boring.” He said the Academy gave him something more; something that was more meaningful to his future.

However, John explained he was able to participate in more academic clubs and activities at his former high because he had more time. Even though he missed out on some of the extra-curricular opportunities, the academic challenge he faced at the Academy has benefited him
more. For example, John said, “We were encouraged to write an 8-page paper for our final back at home. And it’s like okay we’ll spend 5 days and get three pages into it. Where, here, it’s like, alright you need to write a 12-page paper and by the end of the first day you are 6 pages into it. So, really it’s just opened me up in an expanded capacity, is the best way I can explain it.” He remarked that the work at his home school was not hard at all and things he was most challenged in his former school would now be much easier because of the type of work he has done at the Academy. John said it took about two weeks to get into a comfortable routine, balancing his academic demands, schedule and social life.

**Social adjustment.**

Socially, he characterized his experience as “odd.” He discussed the importance of finding a social group. He said it was similar to his home school. There, he explained he had a close group of friends. He said, “Over here it’s kind of like we are all in the same school and you just want to get your clique.” He discussed the function of this clique. He said, “Because it seems like if you just know everybody but you don’t have like a specific group, then you’ll be able to do work, come out to the lounge for a little bit, chitchat with whoever then head back and do work. Where, if you actually have a group, you’ll actually bring your homework out and if you guys have the same assignment, you’ll work on it, if not you guys will talk while working on your assignments.” He felt working in a specific group was more advantageous. These times of collaboration helped him check his work, socialize and help others in the process. For him, academics were a part of the social interaction.

However, John indicating that he was having more difficulty connecting with his classmates this year. He explained it was easier for him to connect with the junior class for socializing activities because they were more motivated socially whereas the senior class became
more fragmented. He explained, “At the end of last year, just some things happened and we basically left off with that. Never really had any time to heal from it and it just healed with a crevice in between basically. And so, I’ll still just go talk to just about all the seniors with ease but, like I’ve basically changed my main social group to juniors.” Some of the hurtful comments made were never followed by apologies, which created a shift in John’s main group. John defended his position, “I mean, it’s also one of those things where they didn’t really come back and talk to me so I’m like, I’m not just going to worry about it”. John also explained the various levels of his friendships. He said,

“You have people that you hang out with some more so than others, and then it just kind of fades outward, exponentially. But, it’s like the people you hang out with all the time. Even through the most stressful times when you just want to be isolated you’d rather, you still want to hang out with them. Rather than go out and be social with everybody else. But, you can still go out and talk to those, the others, the next level to come. You can still be interactive but it’s like I’ll go and talk with you at lunch but I have work to do so I’ll like go back to my other friend’s room or I’ll just go back to my room or whatever. And then, it kind of works that way during the stressful times.”

John’s descriptions of levels of friends indicated that his circle of friends was dictated by the level of stress he was under at a given time; wherein, the closest set of friends was utilized during more stressful times and as this stress decreased more free time was available and the outer levels of friends were added. This description provides insight to the more complex social adjustment. For John, this contains both positive and negative aspects that affected his experience of the school.
**Social comparison.**

John was asked about how he views his peers and how these views influence him. He expressed that peer academic comparisons are something he tries to avoid. He said he sees that some students demonstrate mastery in one or two subject areas where others have moderate ability in many areas. Even in recognizing these differences he stated, “It doesn’t make that person any less, because everybody has their place. “ For John, he said he strives to be more “well-rounded.” In explaining his reasoning for this approach, he said,

“I can help teach physics. I can help teach chemistry, but I doubt that there will be any time where I can completely master them. But I can do all these areas, and so I’ve actually used that in my perspective for the future. Like one of the things that I would love to do, is I would love to be able to go up there, come up with ideas, and like start putting them into place, find people who can and can’t do them and then like, kind of get them organized and going and watch it pull itself together. So, and that’s partially why I look at that person has those talents that person has those talents. Pull them together, you can do this really well, meet this goal, etc.”

This observation of diverse ability has assisted John in developing a greater appreciation for other people. He said, “I have had such a variety in culture here. I’ve feel like it’s not going to make me nervous to go anywhere or meet new people or whatever. And not to mention, I can actually pull out relatively intelligent conversations now. So rather than being like ‘how’s the weather,’ I feel like I can actually sit down and talk to them for a little bit.” In this environment it is apparent that John was able to experience and respect differences in a more meaningful way.

*Jane (b)*
Jane is an 18 year-old Caucasian female. Her YOQ-SR total score at the beginning of her junior year was 20 and decreased to -6 during her final semester as a senior. Jane reported she was encouraged to come to the Academy by a family member who thought she should separate from her troublesome younger sister. Jane also stated she was bored with her former school and now enjoys what the Academy has to offer. Jane said, “I really love the classes. I love the teachers. The teachers are amazing. So, that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay the teachers and the classes.” Jane used the word “different” to describe her Academy experience.

**Psychological change.**

Since coming to the Academy, Jane reported noticing a difference in how she manages her time. She reported, “I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I’m way better now.” Jane also indicated one of her biggest stresses was her immediate family. “I still talk to my family a lot, but that’s another thing I’ve kind of learned while I’ve been here, I guess, is to be able to respectfully deny them the pleasures of venting to me.” By coming to the Academy, Jane has created a physical boundary separating her from some of the strain of her family. In her case, moving away from her family seems to have had a positive effect on her ability to perform. She explained, “I feel like that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of like calm it down and just, when I get stressed I just try to sit down, I try to say, ‘Ok, it’s fine, this is what I need to do’ and I kind of organize it all out in my head when it needs to be done by.” In a way, managing her family stress may have helped adapt to the demands of the Academy.

Although she was never a procrastinator, Jane feels the Academy allowed her to manage her time more appropriately. Jane discussed having priorities (i.e. family, schoolwork, a boyfriend, friends, personal time, etc). All these things she reported she has become more skilled at handling by being at the Academy. She also indicated she has learned to be more flexible in
her organizing various demands. She said, “I’ve learned that you have to give and take a little bit everywhere.”

Jane stated she believes she is more prepared for college. She said if she had not come to the Academy she would be “very naïve” about a college course load. Jane said the Academy also had a cognitive expanding effect. She said, “I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives. I feel that being here at the Academy I am being taught, like sort of the way our teachers teach, they teach a higher education than my teachers at home do. They go more into depth.” This depth of teaching and exposure to challenges has prompted Jane to perceive more opportunities.

**Academic adjustment.**

Her Academy experience has also motivated her to change how she approaches her academic responsibilities. She said, “I realized that I need to do my homework before I go and hang out with friends or anything like that. It’s my first priority, get done with classes, do my homework, then if I have time I do something else. Because academics are a huge part of my life, but it’s not the whole thing and that’s something I’ve managed to realize.” These modifications have enabled her to be a more efficient student. Nonetheless, this work-first-play-later system has resulted in her sacrificing some former extracurricular activities. She admitted she misses these activities, but stated, “I feel like it was a good exchange.” Jane indicated she likes challenges and the academic challenge is preparing her for college. She explained she is challenged to explore the course material with greater depth than what she was exposed to at her former high school. She explained, “At my home school I wouldn’t put as much effort into my school work because I was getting a 4.0 at my home school without doing anything outside of school, I would just do my homework in class and that was it.” This was not her experience at
the Academy. She reported her workload regularly extended outside of the classroom. Now, her academics required more time and effort to obtain slightly lower grades than what she was able to achieve effortlessly at her former high school. She added, “I still have a 3.94 GPA which is good for me.” She reported,

One downfall of the Academy is that academics are so the main focus that kids often get lost in their social activities because they’re so worried. And that just follows through with everything. It’s like, ‘Ok, I’m sitting here with my friends, at dinner, and I’m freaking out because I have this test.’ I guess that’s another time management thing too. You’re freaking out about a test, you’re probably should be studying instead of socializing to begin with. So, it’s, I think that’s a very big deal to me, being able to control those two different selves.

Jane believed she was able to manage being overly focused on academics, but feels that for others socializing was a form of procrastination. She believed it was a problem that academics were the “main focus” which causes student to become lost in socializing activities. She discussed this notion based on changes in behavior inside and outside of the classroom. She explained,

When I’m inside the classroom, I’m focused. I know, like it’s time to put away my cell phone, it’s time to focus on what’s at hand, try to figure out what’s going on. And when I’m outside the classroom it’s kind of more, ‘Ok, I know I have to do all this’ while I’m outside the classroom, ‘This is the block of time I’m going to do that in.’ But, say if I’m socializing or something else, usually I’m not sitting there worried about a test or complaining to them about how much homework I have or things like that, which I feel
that a lot of us do without even realizing it because it’s just like you’re just so stressed and I feel that some kids can’t like relieve that stress.

Jane asserted this was something she avoids by focusing on her homework first and then finding time to socialize when she can.

**Social adjustment.**

Jane reported she changed how she socializes in order to keep up with her academic demands. Reflecting on her Academy experience, she said, “I think it’s made me a little bit less social than I was at my home school. Because I was really social at my home school and here I just kind of keep to myself.” She reported she actually chose to be less social. In her spare time, she now prefers to read a book or watch a movie by herself. She believes this social adjustment helped her become more efficient.

Although, Jane explained she never really had a curfew at her home. She explained, “I feel like the Academy offers a lot of freedom, I think, but in like the exact opposite way from being home. But I think that in order for it to be more like a college life, where there’s not going to be those boundaries, like I understand kids have to come in so late at night, but the thing is, is that, that’s not going to happen [when they go to college].” She reported she believes the enforced curfew of the Academy is not comparable to what students will face in college when there is no curfew. Although, Jane was aware these limitations they did not interfere with her ability to cope at the Academy nor was she expecting to have this problem at the collegiate level because her experience at home. Nevertheless, she was concerned that other students may not get a realistic enough experience at Academy depending on where they attend college.
Social comparison.

At the Academy, Jane also noticed differences among her peers in how they approach various academic demands. She said, “I think a lot of people have so much homework, they just kind of want to escape it. So they’re always just down in the lounge, or always out doing something, and it’s kind of the opposite of me I guess.” Jane feels dissimilar from her peers in using socializing to delay her homework. This is likely why she tends to separate herself from her peers not to get trapped into that type of maladaptive behavior.

Furthermore, Jane reported she has felt that her classmates are “very competitive about everything.” For example, she explained,

“If someone even hints that they might be a teeny bit smarter than you can just spark someone and it can just cause an argument. I think that’s crazy because I never had to experience that at my old school because as far as I knew, no one knew I was in Honors classes, no one knew I was in AP classes, except for if they were in my classes. So that’s the thing, people brag about their academics so much. And that’s like, them. That’s, it’s just so different.”

Jane appeared to be able to keep her academic self-concept intact by how she manages her time and social interactions. Though she felt connected to her peers, she differentiated herself based on time management and competiveness. However, she admitted that being surrounded by higher-achieving students still influences her academic goals. She admitted, “I don’t want to get the worst grade in the class. I mean, I’m fine with a medium grade and I’m very happy if I have one of the highest grades.”
Daniel (c)

Daniel is an 18 year-old Caucasian male senior. His YOQ-SR Total Score at the beginning of his junior year was 5 and -1 during his last semester as a senior. Daniel explained he came to the Academy, “Because I needed to get out, because I feel that’s what a lot of people do, it’s not that they come here because this is better, they come here because that [former school] place is so much worse.” He also reported he came to honor the untimely death of his older brother who died a year before he enrolled. He said, “Because of him, I think that was one reason I came. Then I stayed just because I wanted to.” Daniel used the word “interesting” to describe his experience at the Academy.

Psychological change.

According to Daniel, his preconceived notions about the Academy experience were not necessarily true. He stated, “I thought it would be tougher and I thought a lot of people would be just focused on academics and not really social and like people would be just, ‘I’m here to learn’. And making friends is an afterthought. But, after a few days, I realized that that’s not true, that it’s probably more the other way around.” Apparently, when he first started, he found a trend of students socializing more than doing homework. Daniel’s perspective was that people were sincerely sociable and were not avoiding homework with social interaction.

Daniel reported the most stressful time for him was when he was suspected of using an illegal drug with friends at the Academy and was facing expulsion. He said several of his classmates were dismissed. He explained his parents “really valued education” and did educational activities at home when he young. Daniel said his mother told him if it was discovered he was using drugs, then she would not provide financial support for him in college and he would be “grounded until graduation.” Fortunately, he reported it was confirmed he was
not involved in drug use. Due to these occurrences, Daniel was careful not to disappoint his family or the memory of his brother. He admitted if it were not for being at the academy he would probably be working a “crap job” somewhere. Due to utter boredom, he said he would likely be using drugs (i.e. marijuana) if he did not come. Daniel reported he was very grateful to be Academy to avoid those potential situations and expulsion. Aside from the possibility of being expelled, Daniel reported experiencing little psychological distress. In fact, he found the academy environment to be more manageable than what he had originally anticipated. Nonetheless, the threat of expulsion changed his viewed of with whom he should interact because it endangered his educational opportunity.

**Academic adjustment.**

Even though it was not as hard as he expected, Daniel indicated his academic demands stimulated the greatest change. He explained he use to play video games at his former school during class and still maintained good grades. At his former high school, he described his freshman and sophomore years “like summer for two years.” Daniel admitted, although the academy was not particularly difficult for him academically, “I could be taking harder classes, but I think I would be overwhelmed.” Daniel’s approach was to do well but not over work in the process. He said, “Even though I try I still don’t get straight A’s. Because it means like my best isn’t ‘A’ material, and I want something that hard. And so coming here and being able to have that level of teaching, I think that’s fulfilling.” Daniel was content with the level of effort he put forth. He recognized that he still had room for improvement and that seemed to satisfy him academically. He added, “I mean, before coming here I can’t remember the last time I actually had homework, like I had to take a book home.” Daniel discovered that he had to modify his
study habits in order to maintain satisfactory grades. Making this adjustment improved his outlook towards school by keeping him more active.

In fact, the academy environment was more similar to his home environment and his former school environment. Daniel said at home he and his family members would participate in homemade learning activities. He said, “My family has always really valued education and so I always was challenged even at home.” He discussed how he would to do research on various topics and present the information to his family members. In this respect, the Academy matched his home environment well; it provided him with a familiar communal learning environment.

Social adjustment.

Socially, Daniel reported he did not have any challenges. He said, “I think that socially it hasn’t really done much for me; because, everyone always says that living in the Academy is like living in one big family. That is what I came from so it’s not really much of a change for me anyway.” According to Daniel, his home environment was comparable to the Academy environment. Even having a roommate was customary to him because he grew up with four siblings. Daniel adapted well to what he considered a family-like environment. This was apparently the type of environment he enjoyed at home and likened it to the Academy.

Though Daniel felt like a part of a bigger family at the Academy he still had different levels of friends. He explained,

I feel like sometimes I have less friends than I have acquaintances. I have three really close friends that I talk to and hang out with all the time but I feel like other people have a lot more close friends than I do. I think it’s partly my fault because I go home on the weekends a lot and so a lot of prime socializing time is spent at home.
Daniel recognized that his failure to spend more quality time at the Academy may have interfered with his ability to have closer friends. His ability to frequently access his home family, although convenient, may have limited his number of friends. Nonetheless, this did not prevent him from establishing close bonds with a small peer group at the Academy. He also added,

I think that I have made a lot of friends, even though I say I haven’t made a whole bunch of really close friends. I think I’ve made friends in different ways than I would have, than I would at home. Part of it is because all of my friends are my neighbors too pretty much. So I think that because of the closeness I do have just different, like a unique relationship with all my friends.

The proximity in which the students live also formed a unique bond for Daniel. His fellow students were not just encountered at school or in class as in a traditional school; but they live, eat, study and play together. In this respect, they were all experiencing the Academy together. These friendships were unique due to the variety of contexts available within the Academy.

These shared experiences formed a special bond that Daniel could not have established at his previous school. Moreover, Daniel reported he now feels like there is a wall between him and his friends at home. He said,

It was always hard to dumb myself down and talk about the stuff they talked about, it was kind of boring. And so, I still, I do hang out with some of my friends, but not really. We don’t really get each other. And I don’t think that I have. We ever really have different priorities. They don’t care about planning, or anything really intelligent and I do.

Even though he initially reported the school has not done much for him socially, it seems it has provided him with a peer group he can relate to intellectually. Daniel has more of an affiliation with his peers at the Academy compared to his former school. He said, “I mean everybody
changes when their social group changes and I think that has an effect on my friends back home too.” Daniel understood changing social groups influenced him and how he interacts with others. His reported his priorities and outlook shifted by his association with other Academy students.

**Social comparison.**

For Daniel, coming to the Academy created a separation between him and his former peer group. He referred to this as a “wall” or not being able to “get each other.” Daniel reported he was actually teased at his former school and called a nerd. However, he said it did not bother him because he knew they were jesting. He also indicated that he believe they did not take their education as sincerely as he did. He stated, “I think they think of education just as a way to get a job. I think of it more as I just want to learn.” Apparently, Daniel was already aware that there was a difference between him and other students at his previous school. The alternate value or purpose of education may have separated him from his peers cognitively, but was not manifested more concretely until he came to the Academy.

The personal awareness of the comparative value of education among his peers may have influenced his initial expectations coming to the Academy. Daniel said he expected people to be more focused on academics at the Academy, which he found was not the case. Nonetheless, he always exposed the academic comparison that occurred.

“I think people always do compare ability and like test scores and sometimes I do fall prey to that. But I mean I try not to really, because it doesn’t seem to do much good. I mean, just knowing that someone else is better than me or if I’m better than someone else, it really doesn’t, it’s not going to change me so I actually try to avoid that.”

Daniel clearly had an awareness that these academic achievement comparisons were occurring, but he was resistant to letting them influence his own academic self-concept. Daniel took a more
negative attitude towards making these types of comparisons; as though it is something doing can victimize you. He believed making upward or downward comparisons were not profitable to his personal development.

Cindy (d)

Cindy is a 16 year-old Caucasian female senior. Her initial YOQ-SR Total Score was 12 and also 12 during her last semester as a senior. Cindy reported her mother encouraged her to enroll at the Academy because she noticed Cindy was not being challenged at her former school. Cindy said, “I was really bored in school. I had all A’s. I never studied. I didn’t need to do my homework until five minutes before class just so that it made me work.” Cindy used the word “entertaining” to describe her experience at the Academy.

Psychological change.

By coming to the Academy, Cindy reported experiencing changes in her sense of control and awareness. She said, “I’ve matured a lot. It changed my attitude a lot. When I was at home, I was still, like I had to have something a certain way and if it was not that way, I would freak out.” Cindy learned she was not able to always get things on her terms. Her reaction was to panic if things did not work out how she wanted. She explained, “At first I was like freaking out where if it wasn’t exactly how I my schedule was, I would freak out. And, like I’ve learned to be more laid back since I’ve been here which has been really good because I was so uptight when I was at my old school.” Cindy said she developed a more “laid-back” approach and learned how not to panic when things do not work out exactly how she wants. Part of this, she indicated, resulted in her realizing there are 299 other students that all needed to be accommodated. She understood that her desires did not supersede those of others. In addition, her exposure to ethnic and economic diversity helped her become aware that people have different backgrounds and
resources. This too helped her become more appreciative of the opportunities she had growing up. She stated, “I guess I’ve learned to like have a better outlook on everything, but I think I’m stronger too.”

Though Cindy reported feeling stronger, this did not come without facing some adversity. Reflecting on her year as a junior, she said, “I was so stressed. I did not think I was going to be able to make it through the year. I thought I was going to get like flunked out or something and I had like A’s and B’s, but that’s just how I felt.” She explained her short-lived bleak outlook stemmed from not feeling in control and a lack of sleep from trying to juggle a number of responsibilities (i.e. school, friends, and athletics). Nonetheless, Cindy reported continuing to feeling supported throughout that difficult time. She said,

Even in like your most stressful moments, I’m not really that worried. Like this year, I’ve only had a few moments where I’m like a little freaked out and even then I’m still a lot more relaxed then I would have ever been at home because I know I have support here even though my family’s not here, you still have support…like right now, I have my friends outside the Academy and my friends inside the Academy and I’m at my like best point right now, like I can balance everything, I have straight A’s, I’m still I’m talking to my mom everyday again, which is really really good. Like I mean I miss my family and I wish they were here but that just prepares you for next year.

For Cindy, this support network provided her with a sense of security that extended beyond her own capacity. She agreed that her experience at the Academy helped her think more broadly and become more flexible. Cindy said if she would not have come to the Academy, “I would have been a lot more stressed out, but that would have just been because I would have made myself stress because I would have nothing else to do. But I feel like I would have turned into the kind
of people that I don’t like, which is the snotty, rich kid type. I think I would not have let myself get to my full potential.”

**Academic adjustment.**

Academically, Cindy discovered she had to spend more time working to maintain the higher grades she was accustomed to getting. At the same time, she decided she wanted to take the more challenging coursework. She said, “I’m in AP Physics C and I’m in AP Calculus and I took AP Chemistry last year and I have all A’s. And so I feel, at least like within my education, I’ve learned that procrastination will get you nowhere and like you really do need to try harder. I’ve just realized that you have to do your schoolwork as soon as you get it because you can’t put it off.” Apparently this was a lesson Cindy had to learn. She explained, “Last year I wasn’t, I still got my homework done but I wasn’t as on top of things and I kind of just realized you can’t have your phone out when you’re doing your homework and you can’t have Facebook up because it does you no good.” Time management became a critical part of Cindy’s success academically.

Cindy also commented that the enthusiasm of the teachers is much different. She said the teachers at her former school, “never cared about anything… the teachers talked so monotone and they didn’t care at all… I wasn’t even tired and I would fall asleep in class every single day.” She then cited an experience with an Academy instructor who taught so enthusiastically and even jumped upon a table while teaching a lesson. Cindy said, “It just made everything more interesting. I love it.”

**Social adjustment.**

Socially, Cindy reported she has gained a broader perspective and appreciation for other people. She said,
So like being here I get to see like all different classes, all different races and it was surprising to me on how well everyone could interact. Because at first I did not expect that, I expected everyone to kind of segregate because where I’m from that’s kind of how it is. Like there is certain areas of the town that are segregated pretty much, and so that’s like what I expected. And so it’s kind of cool to be able to interact with everybody and I don’t know. I guess I’m more diverse. I guess you could put it that way.

At the Academy, Cindy experienced a more integrated social environment. Cindy seemed to understand this experience as valuable to her personal development.

Cindy’s learning to be more flexible has also transferred into her social relationships. She admitted, “I did have control over all my friends, well that sounds so bad, but I did. I had like control over my friends and we would always do, I’d be like, ‘Ok, we’re going to do this at this time’ and it just like was expected and now it’s like, I don’t even plan things anymore.”

Apparently, by coming to the Academy, Cindy has become less controlling of her friends. This may be due the fact the Cindy now has less time to control her friends. Nonetheless, it has improved her interpersonal relationships. Cindy explained she developed a variety of friends which helped her stay grounded. For her, it was important to not only to have friends inside the Academy but also outside. She explained, “When things are going really well I love this place because, to me, I feel like you need to have outside friends. You can’t just have Academy friends because then I feel trapped. Like I feel like this is a jail cell, this is the only place I can be.” She said her friends outside of the Academy helped her feel “normal.” She said the inside friendships can become strained because everyone becomes stressed and since they are living together, “there is a lot more drama.” Having outside friends provided her an escape from the stress and intrusive rules she disliked. Her outside friends provided her with a greater sense of
freedom. These friendships were obtained by participating in athletics and getting involved with local community activities and events. She still reported that she loved having her best friends down the hallway and having more meaningful conversations than at her former school. She said, “being here you can have an intellectual conversation with someone about something that actually matters or you can talk about your future.’

Social comparison.

Cindy made little academic comparisons with her peers. She said, “I don’t really know how I’d compare to other students but I feel like I’ve seen it from like an outside perspective since this is the stuff that I went through last year.” She only noted the importance of managing time as a lesson she has tried to teach to the next junior class. Cindy explained that for her the most important attribute to surviving the academy was maturity, not intelligence or general ability. To her, knowing how to manage time and take care of your responsibilities without parental supervision was a critical part of her success. Another point of comparison, noted earlier, was the diversity that exists with the academy provided her an added opportunity to learn. Otherwise, it seemed there was minimal conscious influence from other students’ relative academic performance on hers. Still, Cindy considers herself more efficient than her peers and is proud of her academic standing. She mentioned having “all A’s” four times during the interview.

Sarah (e)

Sarah is an 18 year-old Caucasian female junior. Her initial YOQ-SR Total Score was 43 and increased to 57 during her last semester as a senior. She reported her primary reason for coming to the academy was to be eligible for more college scholarship opportunities. She said, “It’s mostly because we [her family] really can’t afford too much and they [her parents] want me
to be able to understand the meaning of a dollar a little bit better. “Sarah used the word “hell” to describe her experience at the academy.

**Psychological change.**

Sarah stated her mother told her it was Sarah’s responsibility to keep her grades up and stay motivated. When asked about how being at the academy has affected her, she said.

I think it depends on the person and their background. Honestly, and I think a lot of it depends on what their mindset is coming in. I came in expecting this to be great and wonderful and everything that they say at orientation. But it was a lot of troubles back home, like my own issues brought to the academy. I wasn’t really ready to deal with everything. And I guess, I don’t know, here it can be a toxic environment to some people, like to me. I mean, I’ve stayed just because it was a good education, but I don’t know how great it’s been for me personally. I’m learning stuff I think.

According to Sarah, she feels her difficulties at home negatively influenced her ability to adapt at the Academy as well as having too high expectations. Her pressures from home apparently made her more vulnerable to the “toxic environment” and she was essentially overwhelmed by stress. In spite of this strain, her desire to have a better education helped her persevere. She described herself as someone who does not quit. She said she has been able to keep her grades up to A’s and B’s while participating in athletics but feels increasingly agitated.

According to Sarah, the academy has taught her to think more analytically about her education and her environment. Although analytical thinking might be considered as a positive, Sarah reported experiencing this thinking style in a negative way. She explained, “I analyze things when I shouldn’t be analyzing them because it makes me more judgmental than I would be. I’m already on edge because of stress and then people will say stupid things or things that
are just really really annoying. And I don’t know, I just get annoyed by people and I think the Academy has definitely changed me.” Sarah feels the academy has made her more critical of others. She said she used to be more easy-going and approachable. This is contrary to Cindy’s reported experience. Now, Sarah indicated she feels like she is more introverted. She said,

I’m more of a room hermit. I’d rather not be down here [in the student lounge]. Like I could, I guess you can see the difference between the juniors and the seniors. Like all of my friends last year they would you know, be very social and after about a year, you realize some things all of my friends are basically room hermits now too. And, I don’t know, it changes people whether it’s for the better or not.”

In Sarah’s case, she feels it has changed her for the worse. She reported feeling more withdrawn and irritable. She explained she does not like the way she is now. She said if she did not come to the Academy she would be happier and more outgoing. She said even her parents have argued with about being so stressed and “being so high strung.” She said her stress level has caused her behavior to change. Sarah’s experience of the academy has had an apparent negative effect on her mood, sense of self and interpersonal relationship.

**Academic adjustment.**

Sarah stated there was a difference between the academy and how her former school approached academics. She said, “Well at a regular high school it’s all about worksheets and being repetitive being able to just pretty much memorize things whereas here you can’t go off memorization. They actually make you find symbolization in books, stuff like that, things you would miss if you were just reading.” At the academy, Sarah was being challenged to examine the material at higher levels of comprehension. She felt that this approach was helping her to be prepared academically. She reported feeling more challenged. She described herself as a highly-
motivated student who wanted to excel at academics so she was willing to adapt. She said, “I felt like this opportunity would have been better than any opportunity at [her home school]. And it would be a chance to learn more; knowledge is power.” Sarah said she was hopeful that in spite of the challenges with coursework she would be better prepared for college. She explained she has been able to maintain good grades but she feels considerably more distressed.

**Social adjustment.**

Sarah explained her social interactions have become increasingly difficult. She said, “I can’t stand the people here. I don’t know, I think being here has gotten me to be more easily agitated. Like I can’t stand a lot of people and my nerves are on edge all the time. And, I mean I know they said it’s going to be really, really hard thing to do but I don’t think they really prepare you.” Sarah said she was referring to the recruiters from the school who got her excited about the school but did not provide a holistic representation of what would be required. Sarah reported feeling much more agitated from her junior to senior years. During her junior year, she said she really did not feel supported. She said she lacked close friendships and was having relationship problems with her mother. She said, “Last year I didn’t really have somebody to go to for everything.” She explained that it was difficult for her to make friends after the first year because everyone has already joined a peer group within the first month of school. She stated she missed out on forming a peer group because she was concerned about her academics and stress from home. Sarah reported still not truly feeling she has someone to connect with at the academy. She said, “I think it’s just a lot of pressure. And if you don’t have an outlet then all it will do is destroy you.” She said her outlets now are working out or watching, going somewhere else,
reading a book, or watching a favorite television show. However, she explained she has little time for those activities because she is so busy.

Nonetheless, Sarah expressed a desire to be more social, but her priority was to ensure she was prepared for college. She explained, “I want to be as social as I once was, but I don’t really agree, like my opinions about people have changed. All the people that I was friends with at my old school, their priorities are different than mine. And it’s like set in stone that my priorities aren’t to party, to do any of the crazy stuff that teenagers do. I feel like I’ve grown up and skipped being a teenager.” Sarah feels her experience at the Academy caused her to mature faster and bypass the typical adolescence experience. Her altered perception has ultimately shifted her approach to engaging socially. The mental separation from her peers has influenced her ability to engage socially. She added, “Honestly, yes, I would put myself through hell again just because I know I’m going to benefit from it at some point. And hopefully at that point I can say it was worth it. I don’t know, I guess I was just taught to work now play later. So I guess it just works out.”

**Social comparison.**

Sarah reported being aware of the different ability levels among the students at the academy. Though she regards herself as “highly motivated” she does not think she is gifted. She said, “But some people here are naturally gifted and naturally able to get everything done whereas there are others like me who struggle through it all. You know, people who easily got A’s and didn’t have to study at their old school. I worked my butt off and I still wasn’t even at the top of my class. I was just fighting; fighting for it.” Sarah’s fight was her fight to achieve and accomplish her academic goals. At the academy, her fight became more challenging. She said, “They’re just so many people are so many different levels. And here, it’s pretty much, you
know there are different levels here but we’re all held at the same standard; whereas, at a normal high school there are different standards for different people.” Like other students, Sarah recognize the different abilities her peers. Sarah does not seem to believe is as capable as her other Academy students. In discussing the SAT she said, “I can’t test well and a lot of people here can so they’ve got their 2180’s and their 2200’s and stuff and I’m stuck on the lower half. And I always feel stupid here.” Sarah said she feels less capable than her peers when compared to her classmates. This seems to have an effect on her academic self-concept. She added, “It’s really competitive here but I don’t know, I’ve learned to ignore it a little bit.” She realizes that making these competitive academic comparisons is not healthy for her. Regardless, Sarah was determined to make the best of her situation and persist in meeting her academic goals.

Maya (f)

Maya is an 18 year-old Hispanic/Caucasian female senior. Her initial YOQ-SR Total score was 69 and increased to 77 during her last semester as a senior. Maya reported she enrolled at the academy to get away from some of the difficulties she had at school and with her parents. She said she told herself, “I just really needed to get out of here.” The academy provided her with that opportunity. Overall, she described her experience at the academy as “interesting.”

Psychological changes.

For Maya, the academy has been a way to escape. She explained if she had stayed at home she would have likely moved in with her sister or had a nervous breakdown. Maya felt a great deal of strain from her former school environment and at home. She stated she had various somatic symptoms for which she was taking medication. She said, “I kind of like thank God. It’s just one of those things where I think that I got enough freedom that I was able to feel, like I didn’t feel choked to death.” The academy became a way out for Maya. She described coming to
the academy as though it were a treatment center that allowed her to examine herself. She said, “I went to rehab and I was able to relax and not have communication with my former self and just be able to concentrate on who I really was, what I needed to do to prepare for the real world but there were people watching me to make sure I didn’t hurt myself or others and that I was doing the program right.” According to Maya, coming to academy allowed her to experience mental clarity. She characterized the school as rehab because she was still being supervised. She said, “It’s rehab with internet.” These psychological changes were instigated by the change in environment. This was her primary motivation for coming to the academy, to find relief.

**Academic adjustment.**

Though Maya has experienced psychological relief by coming to the Academy, she was still challenged academically. She said, “It’s made me work harder for sure. It’s made me have to plan out and think more so I think it’s affected me on the whole, like an academic slap to the face of what actually is in the real world, that kind of thing.” The “academic slap in the face” helped her realize what she needs to do to be successful. She said her former school did not prepare her for what she faced at the academy. She explained, “At my old school, like it was very much, you could just sleep and get straight A’s, which is what I did, except for science which I always failed in. But, it was just like, and then I come here and you can’t sleep in your classes, you have to take notes. Sometimes you have to go out of class and talk to your teachers.”

Clearly, Maya was not challenged at her home school. The academic experience at the residential school was the “academic slap in the face” she needed.

Her former school made it more difficult for Maya to adapt to the demands of the Academy. Maya reported she struggled academically her first semester. Initially, she said she was distracted by the social aspect of the academy and the rigor of the classes caught up with her
resulting in her retaking classes over the summer. She reported she had a new approach this year, she said, “This year I started with different notebooks for each class. And like, I had all this stuff and I’m doing well with that but I wish I had that system last year.” Now, Maya said she is more organized and ready for her college experience

**Social adjustment.**

For Maya, the easiest part was adapting to the social environment. At home, she said there were limited types of people. Back home, she said she was always considered as different from most people. Due to this, she had difficulty fitting in at her home town and school. She said she was often teased and she would become angry or withdraw. She even transferred to another private school but did not fit in there either. At the academy, she experienced different types of people and people who were more like her. She said, “It was easier getting along with people here and make friends mostly because they have no idea who you are. And it’s just easier to be yourself because there’s no pre-judgment going on.” Maya was able to reinvent herself or simply be who she was. Maya felt the social environment of the residential school suited her well. However, now that she has to spend more time with workload she has little time to socialize. Maya seems content regardless of the academic challenges she has faced. She said, “I thinking for the most part it’s a pretty good stage of my life…it the best it could be so far.”

**Social comparison.**

The new academic environment has also placed her in a new social frame of reference. When asked how she sees herself relative to her peers, she said,

Actually some of them are pretty normal but I’m just unique. I’m eccentric. I find it funny to be eccentric to an extent. I don’t know. I don’t feel like I’m smart, like at all.

It’s one of those things where I’m pretty sure I’m the dumbest person in my class but I’m
happy with that because that means that everyone else is doing well because I’m passing. I’m doing decent so that means everyone’s doing well and that makes me feel better about how others are doing. 

Even though Maya said she views herself as unique and even the “dumbest” person in her class, she was not discouraged by this perception. She takes pride in just being associated with the school. She explained,

You know, I don’t know why but it makes me feel rather accomplished even if I’m not top in the class, I’m just in the bottom then it’s like, then I’m in a school of relatively smart people that may not have common sense and may not appear smart, but I know that they’re smarter. And it’s just, I don’t know, I don’t know how else to describe it. Like back at my old school I was one of the smartest people, but that’s not saying a lot. Whereas here if I’m the dumbest person then that’s saying a lot about everybody else, my friends, my classmates, my peers.

Her new peer associations seem to have bolstered her self-concept even though she has positioned herself among least capable students. She remains motivated to do her best.

**Michelle (g)**

Michelle is an 18 year-old Caucasian female. Her initial YOQ-SR total score was 45 and decreased to 24 her last semester as a senior. Michelle reported she came to the academy because she was looking for something more academically. She said, ”Coming to the Academy I was really excited at first because I was like, ‘Oh yes, I’m actually learning stuff again.’ And then after a while that excitement kind of wore off and I was kind of frustrated with what little free time I had and everything.” Michelle used the word “challenging” to describe her experience at the Academy.
Psychological change.

Michelle said she actually expected to be homesick when she first came to the academy. She said, “I was kind of expecting to have that withdraw feeling after leaving and not having my family around me to talk to like face to face or anything.” Though Michelle was anticipating this type of anxiety, she adjusted well. She admitted she was anxious prior to coming to the school. Michelle described herself as shy and thought she would have problems connecting with people. Again, Michelle was pleasantly surprised that she was able to form new relationships. In spite of these more positive outcomes, Michelle did report she noticed her appetite decreased and she lost some weight when she first came. This may have been to her general excitement about being at the academy. She said she quickly regained more weight after the first few months and by the spring she was able to maintain her weight with exercise. She said she does not believe it was a problem with the food because, unlike other students, she liked the food being served at the cafeteria.

Michelle reported she did have to make a number of adjustments in her work and health habits. She said she has been continued to modify how she managed her time to improve her overall well-being. For example she said, “I’ve actually been forcing time out of my schedule for exercising this year because I thought I should be healthier and stuff and since I haven’t had gym for the past two years, I feel it’s time I start exercising more. I’ve been keeping myself within a certain range.” In addition to some of the heath changes she experienced, Michelle also reported experiencing spiritual challenges. She said,” I started becoming like really involved in my religion because I was having some personal questions within myself, not questioning my religion, but certain people around me and the way that they were thinking and acting towards me and made me want to find out like why I kept having negative thoughts towards people.”
Michelle reveals the social environment prompted her to engage more in her religious beliefs for guidance. She explained that tensions among her peers caused her to become distrustful and pessimistic. She said she was not accustomed to having those types of feelings towards others. By using her faith, she explained, “I tried to reform myself into becoming a better person.”

**Academic adjustment.**

Michelle reported she was looking forward to the academic experience at the academy. At her former school, she said she supplemented her classes with extra readings. She said she just did not feel like her former high school was doing enough for her. I asked her about how she adapted to the workload. She said,

I guess it was kind of stressful. The first like two weeks at the academy I thought the homework was really easy and I had expected it to be super hard so I was kind of surprised that it wasn’t hard. But then after that it seemed like everything suddenly increased and I got all this homework load and everything so after that I was kind of like, ‘Oh, I don’t want to do all of this work.’ But I kept trying and got kind of weighed down with all of that.

Academically, the school represented a shift in how she approached her schoolwork. She said feeling overload was something unfamiliar. Nonetheless, Michelle seemed to face this challenge in a positive way by modifying her time based on priorities. She stated,

It also helped motivate me with my free time because coming to the academy I really realized I don’t have much free time anymore and therefore I dropped like almost everything that I used to do for fun. Anything that I found unimportant I dropped. Well it’s for my work but it’s also like I’m dropping those time wasters but replacing them
with things that will actually help me in my future. Because I’ve realized that I don’t have much time till I’m off in the big world doing what I want to do.

Michelle’s mindset was on preparation for her future. Michelle seemed to have no objection to eliminating “time wasters” or activities that were not conducive to her goals. For her, the academy was described as the mechanism that challenged her to maximize her time for productivity.

**Social adjustment.**

Michelle was uncertain of how she would adapt to the social aspect of the academy. She commented, “It’s out of my comfort zone to go up to strangers and start a conversation with them. So I was kind of scared coming in and trying to make friends.” Fortunately, she found it was much easier than expected. At the beginning of her junior year, she said everyone was eager to make new friends. This provided a great opportunity for Michelle to socialize since everyone was motivated to make friends during that time. However, the period of open socializing gradually became more difficult. Michelle explained,

After that, once everyone kind of had their own friends, they kind of split up to their own different groups and it was harder to make friends after that because people had already formed groups and didn’t feel as if they needed to meet as many people as quickly. And I kind of ran out of gas around there as well. I didn’t have the energy to go around and try to make friends as I did when I first came in.”

Michelle observed students breaking off into groups made establishing close friendships more difficult. Other students in this study reported the process of students quickly forming peer groups. The formation of peer groups was an important part of adapting to the residential school.
Michelle said she still was able to make friends, but how she interacted with them changed based on her needs. She said,

I have lots of friends that I like to hang out with but it’s really hard for me to do homework with my friends even if we’re working on the same assignment we end up talking while I’m doing that and they have the same opinions so we usually do our homework separately and since we have such different schedules, we don’t really have time to just hang out and talk so occasionally we will actually get together to do homework that we have same classes for and everything.

According to Michelle, her interactions with peers did not supersede her academic responsibilities. What brought her friends together were times when they could be collaborative with their studies.

**Social comparison.**

Although Michelle did not spend a significant amount of time with friends compared to her work, she still reported being influenced by them. For instance, she explained

I found out from some of my friends how hard they’ve been working on their classes compared to how hard I’ve been working and it seems like I’m putting forth three times more the effort to achieve just a teeny bit above what they have.

Michelle admitted she was somewhat bothered by how much effort she spent working compared to her peers. She said she had even tried to study less to keep pace with her friends (i.e. studying less), but she ends up not doing as well as she could. She commented, “Well, I’m trying to work less because it makes me kind of jealous that they don’t have to spend as much time doing the same things.” Even though she felt envious of the little effort they put forth she said, “When I’m doing just the same as everyone else it seems like it’s not any benefit to myself.” Michelle
indicated that it was simply more important to her to keep her grades up as much as possible over keeping up with friends.

She also reported being influenced into socializing based on what others around her did. She described herself as becoming a “room hermit.” A room hermit is someone who spends a substantial amount of time in their room and you rarely see them around the dormitory or in the lounge. She admitted she does not want to be a room hermit but her academic goals are paramount. She commented, “I’m starting to go, ‘Oh, my roommate who stays in my room all the time, she’s actually going out and hanging out with her friends.’ So it makes me feel like I want to go and be with my friends and not just be sitting in my room all day. So it kind of motivates me.” Michelle used her roommate, who also spends a lot of time in the room, as a gauge to measure if she was in the room entirely too much. It appears that Michelle used her peers at the academy to monitor her behavior.

However, when she was at her former school, she did not feel connected to her peers at all. She said it was much harder to make friends with people who seemed like they just did not care about school. She stated, “I got really frustrated with the people at my old high school and just having to be around those people who were just really lazy and it frustrated me that we would have to work in groups all the time for projects.” During group projects at her former school, she asked for special permission to work on projects by herself. Overall, the academy provided her with a social environment in which she was able to connect and direct her toward her objectives as a student.

Kyle (h)

Kyle is an 18 year-old Caucasian male senior. His initial YOQ-SR Total Score was 57 and decreased to 38 during his last semester as a senior. When asked about what motivated him
to come to the academy he said, “The intellectual endeavor, the opportunity to go. I wanted to leave home badly because I felt like my parents were holding me down. And then once I came here and went back the first extended, they gave me a lot more freedom.” The word Kyle used to describe his experience at the academy was, “interesting.”

**Psychological change.**

When describing his perception of the academy, Kyle noted a common experience shared by him and his academy peers. He said “It is a big thing, but it’s not like we survived some great ordeal or something, but it changes people in a great way.” This description gives the impressions that the academy was like an unforgettable life event that sets a group of people apart from others who don’t experience it and connects those individuals together who do. Kyle reported, “It’s been odd, I’d call it odd. There have been good changes and bad changes but mostly just early changes. Things that are hard, well it’s not super hard to adjust, everyone has to adjust to some things, not everyone else my age has to adjust or deal with on day-to-day basis.” He explained the “early changes” refer to doing things at an earlier age such as having to be accountable for your own time. He talked about a degree of freedom and independence that is afforded at the academy earlier than typical high school students. He reflected,

It’s tough having to balance the heavy workload as well as keeping yourself afloat. At times, it’s hard to be away from home, definitely hard. And sometimes, I feel like I need more time to develop myself. I need to sit down every once in awhile and reassess what my goal is; what I am working towards. But really even if I’m not consciously thinking about it the entire time, I’m still working at it.

The personal development Kyle described is an active process brought on by management of his increased responsibilities and meeting his goals. In this process, he noted a sense of losing touch
with himself that required more reflection to ensure he is on the right path. He said this was much different than what he experienced at home. He described how he keeps a forward mindset while at the academy. He said, “I can’t trace my thought process to where it started when I woke up. At home, that was an easy thing. I would just be sitting at home doing nothing and sit there and be bored enough to be able to trace it back. Here it’s just forward, you can’t go back. No time to do that.” The academy experience was apparently driving him forward at a faster pace in his development.

Kyle was able to describe some outcomes of this experience. Although he originally came to the academy in part to get away from his parents he said, “I actually found out that I didn’t really want to get away from my parents, I kind of ended up getting closer to them, which is a good thing. The whole overall experience has been beneficial.“ In getting way from his parents in proximity the opposite effect has occurred emotionally. He reported feeling closer to his parents more than ever before since he has been at the academy. This may be a reaction to his sense of growing up too fast and retreating back to his parents to delay the process, or because of a deeper appreciation for the scarcer time he has with his parents. Regardless of the reason, he said he has learned some valuable lessons about interpersonal relationships.

In addition, he suggested it is not a good idea to get in a dating relationship prematurely “or at least set some boundaries and think about it a little longer.” He explained finding time to maintain your workload and a good relationship can be problematic. Over time at the academy, he said he also learned better time management skills. He reported “First semester junior year, that’s all I did, procrastinate to the last minute. I averaged about 4-5 hours of sleep a night last semester, not fun. This year though I’ll set out about 8 hours every night.”
Academic adjustment.

Though more challenging, Kyle seemed satisfied with the academic life and what he learned at the academy. He remarked, “It definitely quenches my thirst for knowledge.” According to Kyle, this was the type of academic experience for which he was longing. Compared to his former school, he said, “The work wasn’t as hard, I was able to get it done and I was able to go and have fun daily.” Even though he did not have as much time for fun he still felt like making that sacrifice was worth it. He commented, “There’s so much, I mean I haven’t even been here a year and half yet and there’s still quite a bit that’s happened; a lot that I’ve learned, a lot that I’ve seen, a lot that I’ve been able to extract from what’s happened. It’s just on ongoing, fact-paced experience.“ Kyle was eager to continue to learn and take advantage of the opportunity to grow.

Overall, Kyle said he developed a looser a set of priorities to help manage his personal needs with his academic demands. He said, “That’s just one of the things that lean to the fact of how overwhelming things are here. I mean you should know that school is somewhere near the top and keep yourself near the top of your own priorities but not setting your priorities at the same time, just taking care of things as they come along, staying up late if I have to, taking care of it now if it has to be taken care of.” I know that I’ll always have those days where I have to sit down and do a little more homework, I’m in my room for 4-5 hours just doing homework, even just that for a couple of hours, the work will get to you. It’s not really a burnout or anything like that. It’s just that junior year I felt like I burnt out maybe October this year, I’d say about last week. I need a break.“ Even then, Kyle stated he was feeling fatigued from the academic rigor, but he was still intent on pressing forward.
Social adjustment.

The social aspect was reported as an important dynamic that added to the academy experience. He said, “I’d say if I took the social life out, gosh, I’d have all the time in the world.” The social life clearly was something that added another challenge. At the same time Kyle said, “Without it I would probably be crazy. I’d say it’s what keeps me sane here.” Though socializing was a stressor he also viewed it as a stabilizer. Kyle said he tries to balance his social life into his academic work.

Kyle said, at his former school socializing did not have the same effect or purpose. He explained, “There were a lot of big changes in coming here. I’ve met a lot of different people at home and here at school through people here at school. I’ve always wanted to be that intellectual wannabe.” Kyle said the academy provided him with the type of intellectual peer stimulation he was seeking. He explained the social environment fits him better. He commented about the difference in transitioning back and forth between the academy and his former peer group. He said. “When I go home I don’t like having to dumb myself down. Hanging out with my friends I go back to doing slightly more immature jokes.“ Kyle indicated he had to modify how he interacts to match his respective peer groups, the Academy more intellectual and his former school more juvenile.

Social comparison.

Kyle said he actually enjoys being associated with his peers at the school. He didn’t seem to get caught into negative comparisons or competitiveness. He reported, “I’d say having to work as hard with the people that I get to work with; that’s probably the best part of it. I’d say without the unique individuals here, I probably would be bored. It was worth going away for. I miss them
after a couple of days.” Kyle seemed to form a meaningful attachment to his academy peers that actually promoted his development.

He still made comparisons among his peers but it was not based on academic ability. Kyle commented on the differences based on maturity levels. He explained, “Admissions is one thing, peer acceptance is another. It’s not really what type of person you are, how smart you are or how smart you aren’t or who you used to be or what you do, it just seems to be a maturing process. Seniors, yes, are still very immature, but there’s an aging process to it.” The primary difference he noted was the difference between the junior and senior class; saying his senior class was more matured and experienced than the junior class. He reported he was more immature his junior year as well. He explained, “I wasn’t trying to push too much my junior year but by like second semester I was. You want to know why other people are here. You want to know what it’s like. You want to know what’s next. You want to know what they’re thinking. That’s always the basic thing you do when making friends, you want to be friends with all of them but you still want to know.” Kyle seemed motivated not only by academic learning but also learning about the people who surrounded him. In this case, the social environment helped to promote Kyle’s development.

**Samantha (i)**

Samantha is an 18 year-old Caucasian female senior. Her initial YOQ-SR Total Score was 77 and 73 during her last semester as a senior. She said her older brother, who graduated from the Academy, encouraged her to enroll in the school. She added, “I knew if I stayed at my old school, I would be miserable and I probably wouldn’t get very far as colleges goes. They didn’t give me very many options for the future.” When asked to use one word to describe her experience at the academy she said, “Chaotic.”
Psychological change.

According to the Samantha, the school has driven her to become more responsible and work-oriented. She explained,

As a student, I’ve had to try a lot harder so it’s made me have to be a lot more determined to get things done. And it’s kind of taught me to manage time but I mean but I still procrastinate and everything. So as a student, I guess it’s kind of helped me grow as a student just that I care more about the work I get done and I feel it’s more worth doing. It’s more challenging but more rewarding I guess. And as a person, it just made me more kind of responsible I think.

According to Samantha, the academy has increased her level of determination, improved her time management skills and increased her value in schoolwork. Also, her experience was similar to other students who now felt they had more independence, but more responsibility. She said she knows she has to get her work done, feed herself, go to class, wake up, do her laundry etc. These added responsibilities have helped her grow as a student. She said she did not have that many expectations coming to the academy. She said she thought it would be harder and challenging and it was. She said, “It is a lot more than my old school and just the environment is really what I hoped it would be.”

Although Samantha was pleased with her decision to come to the academy, she admitted sometimes she also regrets it. She said, “As many times as I said I regretted coming I’d probably would [do it again].” I asked her more about these times of regret and she explained,

I was just so stressed out and overwhelmed. I was wondering if it was worth it to feel so sick and just feel so desperate for anything I guess. Because I knew it would have been way easier at the old, like I could have slept the whole time. Once 4:00 comes around
I’m like, ‘I could have been in bed at 10, I wouldn’t have to worry about this,’ and stuff like that.

In spite of the reported increased stress and lack of sleep, Samantha said she preferred this to the boredom of her previous high school. She said she has improved her time management to adapt to the additional work. She commented, “I’ve kind of gotten in the swing of managing time. I mean there’s a few times I slip up but usually, like I always get my homework done no matter what so it’s not extreme procrastinating. “

Overall, Samantha was content with her decision to come the academy. She reported the experience has helped her growth and broaden her perspective. Even though she used the word “chaotic” to describe her experience she said that doesn’t necessarily mean it was entirely bad. She concluded, “I think it was good coming here. It just opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wasn’t aware of before. It brought me around people I never would have met, just traditions I never would have been exposed to I guess. I’m glad I came. It is a changing experience.”

**Academic adjustment.**

One of the main challenges Samantha had to deal with was adjusting to the workload. She said if she had do it over again she would definitely work harder because she understands the teachers’ expectations are higher. She explained this was not the case at her former school. She said, “I was just utterly bored at my old school so I wasn’t very attentive and I just kind of went into myself so I didn’t interrupt class and I was new at that school so that was kind of hard anyway. But, I don’t know, I just think I would be really bored and not very receptive to things I guess. Just bored and kind of miserable I think.” Apparently she did not find her former school stimulating at all. For comparison, I asked her about how she was feeling about being at the academy. She said, “Busy, I’m not having the time of my life or anything, I wouldn’t go that far
but I’d rather have something to do I guess then be really, really bored with it.” Clearly, the academy was preferable to her previous school. She said she believed the academy was at least preparing her for college. She commented,

I think when I go to college I’ll just automatically just hit the ground running I guess. I’ll know basics of how hard I’ll have to work. I’ll probably have to work harder but I’ll know the basics of what I need to do and I won’t have the initial shock value of being away from home and having to do things on my own. I think I’ll skip the usual month of panic that everyone else is going to have; so, just kind of start ahead.

Samantha felt the academy provided her with a head start for college. This advantage was what kept her motivated through the difficult times. The academic preparation was an essential asset to her education experience.

**Social adjustment.**

Samantha was another student who reported not having strong social connections at the academy. When asked about her friends, she stated, “Actually, I don’t really have friends here to be honest. Because I live so close, I go home every weekend so I miss out on the main social opportunities.” According to Samantha, her ability to go home so readily hindered the development of social relationships at the academy. At first, Samantha thought being able to go home with ease served as an advantage. However, because of a lack of social involvement her peer group was limited to a much smaller group. She said, “I have some friends, like my roommate, but I don’t really talk to many people. I have a lot of good acquaintances I guess. Last year I had some friends, like seniors, they were good friends. I don’t personally find a lot of time to socialize because I do try to do my homework.” Apparently, as with other students, her work played a role in reducing the amount of time she could use to develop friend relationships.
She commented on the fact that she primarily associated with seniors during her junior year which also limited her current peer group. These three factors, frequent home visits, general workload, and upper-class connections, limited her ability to connect socially at the academy. She concluded, “I think if like I had a do-over, I would have stayed more on the weekends. These are people that I probably would want to make a relationship with just because they are more open-minded.” Samantha recognized peer relationships as important associations to establish. She considered like-minded peer relationships at the academy to be more desirable than those from her former school.

**Social comparison.**

Even though Samantha lacked varied levels of friendships and had fewer friends at the academy, she still made comparisons with her academy peers. She commented, “I definitely don’t think I’m one of the smartest people here by any means. I am intimidated by some of the other students’ academic background I suppose.” This comment may have evidence to support BFLP because she reported feeling less capable than her peers in the academy environment. She said, “I just try really hard. And I feel like some of it comes really easy to them and I’m jealous of that but I just have to try really hard. I don’t get things automatically.” Other students made similar comments about observing differences in the amount of time spent on homework. However, Samantha appeared to let it negatively affect her academic self-concept. Moreover, Samantha lacks some of the closer relationships some other students reported. Her lack of closer or diverse relationships may contribute to the effect of a lowered academic self-concept.
Table 5  
*Description of Psychological Change Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th>Student Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in thinking style</td>
<td>1. It has broadened the way I think. (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I think about things, I analyze things when I shouldn’t be. (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress after enrollment</td>
<td>1. It was like being thrown in the lion’s den. (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I was so worried about my social life at the time my grades were falling and that was stressing me out more. (f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. There’s been good changes and bad changes but mostly just early changes. (h)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Here it can be a toxic environment to some people, like to me. (e)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. I guess being here made me negative and outlets can range from working out taking out your anger and stress on just like anything. (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. I was just overwhelmed and stressed out really easily at first. (i)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization/time management skills</td>
<td>1. I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I am way better now. (b)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Anything that I found unimportant I dropped. I’ve dropped all the time wasters. (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I have to take care of myself. I have to manage my time. I have to make sure I get up by myself, go to class. I have to make sure I feed myself. (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness for diversity</td>
<td>1. Because I have had such a variety in culture here…I’m more comfortable with people. (a)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I get to see like all different classes, all different races. It was surprising to me how well everyone could interact. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I guess I’m more diverse; I guess you could put it that way. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. It just opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wasn’t aware of before. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. It’s you have to be very multi-faceted to live in a multifaceted world. (h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in appetite, sleep patterns, or health</td>
<td>1. I just didn’t feel like eating as often and I lost a bit of weight when I first came for some reason. (g)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. My day starts early and ends late. (a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I remember we stayed up until like 4am every night and we still had to go to class at like 8am. (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I stressed myself out so bad one day I blacked out in my room and I had to take a sick day. (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism about academic future</td>
<td>1. I’ve actually put some more thought into what I want to do later on. (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. If I hadn’t come here I don’t think I would have the potential to think that far out. (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. I feel like it’s preparing me for college in a lot of ways. (i)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. I guess it’s one of those things where it helped me figure out exactly who I was going to be versus who I could have been. (c)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes in stress management</td>
<td>1. I feel that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of calm it down. (b)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I’ve learned to be more laid back since I’ve been here. (d)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Coming here it’s kind of like I have to put my feelings aside and I hate that. (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of personal growth</td>
<td>1. I’ve have matured a lot. It changed my attitude a lot. (b)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. I guess I’ve learned to have a better outlook on everything, but I think I’m stronger too. (d)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Sometimes I feel like I need more time to develop myself. (h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling confined or overwhelmed</td>
<td>1. I feel like this is a jail cell, this is the only place I can be. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It’s just being stuck in prison for two years. My sentence is two years in hell. (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. This school I would call about 74% free. (h)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. I feel like the Academy offers a lot of freedom, but in the exact opposite way from being home. (f)
2. Once I came here and went back home [my parents] gave me a lot more freedom (h)

### Table 6

**Description of Academic Adjustment Theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th>Student Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of prior intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>1. I wouldn’t have gotten near as this expansive back at my old school by far. (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Before coming here I can’t even remember that last time I actually had homework. (g)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. At my old school you could just sleep and get straight A’s. (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I just felt like I wasn’t even at school at all. (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling challenged academically</td>
<td>1. I think that one fulfilling thing is that even though I try I still don’t get straight A’s. (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It’s made me work harder for sure. (b)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. I’m putting forth 3 times more the effort to achieve just a teeny bit above what they have. (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I worked my butt off and I still wasn’t even at the top of my class. I was just fighting. (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in study habits or priorities</td>
<td>1. I kind of realized you can’t have your phone out when you are doing your homework and you can’t have Facebook up because it does you no good. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It’s made me have to plan out and think more. (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Cutting out free time…helped me manage the homework load because I had that time to look forward to just rest and doing fun things. (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing the course material</td>
<td>1. I’d say it definitely quenches my thirst for knowledge. (h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. We’ll discuss what we think about [the material]. Why we think that this caused that, or how it all worked together. (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. It’s made me worker hard for sure. It’s made me have to plan out and think more. (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration for teachers</td>
<td>1. The teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I love how the teachers are around here that is why I am going to a smaller college. (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The classes are awesome because your teachers are just as excited as you are. (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The teachers were really nice and they’re more one-on-one and friendly. (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invariant Constituents</td>
<td>Student Expressions</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Establishing peer groups     | 1. After about a month I started actually getting in a group. (a)  
2. I think I’ve made friends in different ways than I would at home. (c)  
3. I think it was easier getting along with people here and make friends mostly because they have no idea who you are (f)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Peer group maintenance       | 1. After the first month, about all those people I stopped talking to as much and I made completely different friends because of classes. (a)  
2. Without [my social life] I would be crazy. I’d say it’s what keeps me sane here. (h)                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Conflict with peer groups    | 1. I can’t stand a lot of people here and my nerves are on edge all the time. (e)  
2. I kind of stopped trusting the people around me and I didn’t want to feel distrustful. (g)  
3. Some people said things they shouldn’t have at the worst possible time and never really apologized for it and all that and ever since basically haven’t said a word since. (a)                                                                                       |
| Broadening social group      | 1. You have the closest circle you hang out with all the time then it kind of just fades outward. (a)  
2. The Academy is like living in one big family. (c)  
3. I feel like you need to have outside friends. You can’t just have Academy friends. (d)  
4. I’m really a shy person and I don’t make friends easily but I motivated myself to start over and make friends since no one would really have any friends starting out. (g)                                                                 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th>Student Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Influenced by others behavior          | 1. I guess it makes me work a little bit harder because I see how uptight people are about their grades. (b)  
2. If I hear of someone failing in a class, even if I don’t have the class I panic a little. (b)  
3. I’m trying to work less because it makes me kind of jealous that they don’t have to spend a much time doing the same things. (g)  
4. My roommate makes me feel like I want to go and be with my friends and not just be sitting in my room all day. (g) |
| Upward or downward comparison          | 1. I feel like there a lot of kids way more serious about their schoolwork than maybe I am. (c)  
2. I think people do compare ability and test scores and sometimes I do fall prey to that. (b)  
3. I’m in a school of relatively smart people…here if I’m the dumbest person then that’s saying a lot about everybody else. (f)  
4. I definitely don’t think I’m one of the smartest people here by any means. (f) |
| Recognizing individual differences     | 1. The way I compare people academically is you’ll have people that are well rounded in many areas…then you have those people who master those specific areas. (a)  
2. There are just so many people on so many different levels. (a)  
3. Some people here are naturally gifted and naturally able to get everything done. (b)  
4. I have such a good relationship with my family, I keep forgetting that other people have problems with their own. (d) |
| Peer observations                      | 1. I find that kids here are very competitive about everything. (b)  
2. It’s frustrating to see people let their schoolwork go downhill and I’ve seen it happen to a lot people because they procrastinate. (d)  
3. I’ve seen a lot of Academy students have the same exact problem, being in a relationship at the Academy and then trying to balance it all. (h) |
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Establishing new educational programs to meet the needs of gifted students was an early venture (Magnifico, 1958; Newland, 1956;). Since the advent of residential schools for the academically gifted, researchers have been exploring how students are affected by participating in these selective programs (Coleman, 2005; Dixon, et. al, 2001; Dunn, et. al, 1987; Rimmer, 1992; Yadusky-Holahan & Holahan, 1983). Researchers acknowledge the inherent stress of moving into a rigorous academic environment and have sought to understand the positive and negative effects it may have on students. This study builds on those efforts by emphasizing the student perspective and experience.

This chapter contains interpretations regarding the phenomenological interviews as well as explanations of the quantitative data collected from students enrolled in a residential academy. The summary includes composite descriptions (Moustakas, 1994) that synthesize the interviewees’ reports across the themes: Psychological Change, Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment and Social Comparison. The qualitative and quantitative data are embedded with previous research to provide a more complete description of the student’s experience in the school.

**Composite: Psychological Change**

The students who attended the academy experienced a shift in how they perceived themselves and people around them. Samantha described the academy as “a changing experience.” The type of change was contingent on the individual’s reasons for enrolling, his or her expectations and prior experiences. Whether it was changes in thinking, feeling or behaving,
each student interviewed reported a psychological change across some domain. John described a more expanded way of perceiving his future and surroundings. Cindy provided an exemplary account when she said, “I mean you really do change a lot. Which I guess scares people at first. At first, I was like ‘I don’t want to change for the worse.’ But you don’t change for the worse because you’re going somewhere and you realize it at some point and you help speed up the process after that.” Cognitive consistency theory (Festinger, 1962) gives insight to Cindy’s account. To reduce cognitive dissonance, she modified her beliefs about her transformation by recognizing she was improving for her future. The modification in thinking reduced tension and anxiety, motivating her to continue to achieve and adapt to the challenges she was facing. This was a familiar psychological change students’ experienced at the school. Students not only changed how they thought, but also how they behaved to meet the added demands of the school. Samantha said, “I’ve had to try a lot harder so it’s made me have to be a lot more determined to get things done.” Samantha increased her determination to become more productive. Michelle increased her productivity by eliminating unimportant activities from her schedule. Daniel became more careful about who he associated with in order to not jeopardize his enrollment. Sarah, even though she toiled, was convinced her sacrifices of time and energy would lead to a better outcome for her future. Students recognized they were working for a greater opportunity. In spite of the challenges, they identified new objectives for their futures and new reasons to remain motivated. In a study of anxiety and depression in gifted students at a residential high school, Yadusky-Holahan and Holahan suggested, “Although anxiety is an expected reaction to stress, these students may have developed successful coping mechanisms over many years of grappling with the demands of themselves and others for achievement” (1983, p.45). This
conclusion purported the notion that students’ prior experiences shaped their ability to adapt to the stressful residential environment and potentially beyond (Coleman & Cross, 1988).

Students’ reasons for enrolling also contributed to the type of psychological changes they experienced. The interviewees reported they came to the Academy to get away from home or their home school, to be challenged academically, or to be better prepared for college. Those who came to escape difficulties at home were motivated because they did not want to return to their former environments. The academy became a purposeful experience or at least considered the better of two evils. For example, Daniel said, “I feel that’s what a lot of people do, it’s not that they come here because this is better. They come here because that place (their previous school) is so much worse.” Though this was not an ideal motivation to attend, it was a reality for some students. Actually, enduring previous stressful experiences may have contributed to their ability to cope at the academy. A part of their strategy to reduce stress was to enroll in the academy.

How students experienced the academy was also influenced by their expectations. Did the ideas they had about the school meet their expectations? Cindy commented, “Everything I expected was not what it was…the rules seemed awful and the school seemed hard and at first I hated the seniors.” Ideally, this was a great opportunity to recreate themselves in a new environment. Instead, they felt bombarded with so much homework they had little time for personal freedoms. For instance, Sarah began to question whether it was worth coming and sacrificing her “normal” teenage life: friends, free time, sleeping in, and the like. This gap between expectations and actuality also created cognitive dissonance for students.

Clearly, there were individual differences among the students; in particular, the strategies they employed to reduce stress. Nonetheless, students shared in the experience of adapting.
Based on the results of YOQ-SR Total Scores (see Figure 1), students experienced a moderate increase in the level of psychological distress from the first to second administration. The number gradually reduced overtime, but did not go lower than the initial score. This was explainable within the context of the student interviews; herein, students reported feeling increased levels of stress during the first semester of their junior year. Over time, students began to modify how they thought, felt, or behaved to reach a more harmonious state. In general, these were not dramatic shifts in students’ functioning. The results showed students who experienced greater increases in the total YOQ-SR scores also experienced steeper declines in scores. This supports the notion of the resilience among gifted students (Niehart, 1999). Essentially, the more strained the student felt the more response they became to reduce stress. The students had ability to correct for dissonant feelings and experiences and continue to achieve. Lazarus (1993) described the stress reduction process of individuals as (a) problem-focused coping – attempts to change behavior to influence one’s environment and (b) emotion-focused coping – attempts to change either what is attended to or how it is appraised. These types of coping methods are revealed through the reports of the interviewees when faced with various challenges at the school. The findings contribute to Bland, Sowa & Callahan’s (1994) ideas about the resilience of gifted students. When examining adjustment, Bland, Sowa and Callahan found that cognitive appraisal was alleged to be a key mechanism in developing resilience in gifted youth. Resilience may have increased through the interaction between the individual and a challenging environment. Resiliency in students should be examined further to understand how it is developed (Kline & Short, 1991). In Figure 2, which plots the Intrapersonal Distress (ID) subscale (i.e., depression and anxiety), there appears to be an increase in mean scores from 12.50 at baseline to 14.72 (Table 4) at the second administration. Mean ID scores appear to remain at
approximately the same level over the course of the year. Students’ symptoms of stress appeared to increase after they enrolled in the academy. Nonetheless, on average, the ID scale remained below the clinical level of 17. The challenges within the school actually promoted student development by provoking them to adapt.

**Composite: Academic Adjustment**

The advanced academic experience is considered the central element to attending a residential high school for gifted students (Coleman & Cross, 2001). The interviewees commonly reported being challenged by the coursework. Generally, students expressed they had to work much harder to obtain the good grades of their former schools. It was not as easy to maintain straight A’s. The most noticeable changes were the experiences interviewees expressed between their previous schools and the academy. They reported being bored at their previous schools. Maya stated she was able to sleep in class and still get A’s. John said he was given extra duties around the school to fill his time and Michelle said she would do additional work and readings to supplement her learning. Even Daniel, who thought the academy was not as hard as he expected, admitted he was taking easier classes to reduce stress and was content with passing grades.

Regardless of how challenging, the interviewees reported an appreciation for the teachers and the course material. The most common complaint was the feeling they had less time and had to eliminate extracurricular or leisure activities to keep up with coursework deadlines. The academic experience was viewed as something positive even if it did not produce desirable grades. The students adapted by interpreting the increased responsibilities as preparation for college. Students were willing to endure the hardship to be prepared.
There was not a specific subscale measuring academic performance on the YOQ-SR. However, the Behavior Dysfunction subscale may be the most reflective of academic functioning. It contains items such as “I have a hard time finishing my assignments or I do them carelessly” and “I am disorganized (or I can’t seem to get organized.)” When looking at the growth means over time, the BD scores (see Figure 4) followed a similar pattern to the TS scores (see Figure 1). Initially, there was a gradual increase in scores and then decrease by the end of the year. The strong negative quadratic/slope correlation indicated that the more a student experienced distress on the BD subscale, the more they adjust. Academics are the most obvious form of stress students encounter at a residential school. Festinger (1962) would characterize this type of stress as a challenge or positive form of stress. Due to the amount of work students were assigned, they were likely to endorse items about feeling disorganized or not able to finish assignments. Students who tended to be more perfectionists struggled to meet these demands. Cindy, Jane, Michelle and Sarah all admitted to struggling to get everything done at the beginning of their junior years.

**Composite: Social Adjustment**

The social experience for gifted students is regarded as an essential part of development (Coleman & Cross, 1998; Cross, 1997; Cross, 2004; Neihart, Reis & Moon, 2002;). The opportunity to affiliate with like-minded peers helps develop identity and establishes a familiar support system. The residential arrangement of the academy provides an immersive social and learning environment. The interviewees described influential yet varied social experiences. Over the course of the year, students modified how they interacted with friends. John described a layered effect of friends; few friends who were closer, moving gradually outward increasing in number to more acquaintances. The type of interaction he had with each layer was dictated by
how much stress he was under at a given time. He associated with closer friends when he was under more stress and with other friends when he was having fun. Kyle stated his network of friends helped him “stay sane” while at the Academy. Jane said she became less social and viewed socializing as a form of procrastination. Interactions with peers was based on how the student believed it interfered with or contributed to their academic success.

Initially, students described a general enthusiasm for socializing near the beginning of their junior year. After a while the enthusiasm diminished as students formed smaller peer groups or cliques, started dating or were preoccupied with schoolwork. This information provides insight into Cross and Swiatek’s (2009) study that examined two classes at the academy. The results regarding social interaction indicated students tend to report less social interaction after the first year at the academy. John described the junior class as more motivated to form friendships and more active than the senior class. Cross and Swiatek (2009) suggested that “they [upper–classmen] may have enough in common with other academy students that they no longer need to rely on extracurricular activities to find friends” (p. 31). This change is something also likely to occur in traditional schools. At the academy, the junior class was more inclined to form social alliances and participate in school functions whereas the senior class was oriented toward applying for college and transitioning out of the academy. Over time, social interaction became a function of whether or not interaction contributed to the student’s academic performance rather than fulfilling a need for peer acceptance. For instance, many of the interviewees regarded socializing as a distraction or even a form of planned procrastination.

Comparable to student descriptions of their former academic experiences, students also reported feeling incompatible with peers from their previous high schools. Daniel and Ryan expressed they felt they had to “dumb down” when they visited former classmates. Interviewees
reported noticing differences in their former peers’ priorities and poor attitude towards school. Unfortunately, there was no formal measurement to assess prior peer relationships or academic experiences. This only emerged through the interview process. The Cross and Swiatek (2009) results indicated that students felt more accepted by their academy peers than by those at their former schools. Student interviewees also endorsed feeling more accepted at the academy. Peer acceptance likely contributed to the feeling of dissimilarity with previous classmates. Nonetheless, many of the interviewees felt socially apt and accepted (even if it was by a small group) at their former schools, but they differed in their value for academic achievement.

According to the YOQ-SR, the Social Problems (SP) subscale demonstrated a slight decrease in scores after the initial administrations; then, scores began to increase over time, forming a tilted bowl-like shape (see Figure 3). The SP subscale includes items such as, “I am involved in sexual behavior that my friends or family would not approve of,” and “I cut classes or skip school all together.” It is plausible that students may initially reduce deviant behavior because they are in a new environment and want to be on better behavior or simply lack opportunity. Deviant behaviors may increase over time as they find more opportunity, are less cautious or associate with peers who are involved in deviant behavior (i.e., drug use, sex or truancy).

The Interpersonal Relations (IR) subscale was intended to measure the type of interaction students have with others. This subscale may be a better assessment of the normal social interactions students have at the Academy. The IR subscale includes items such as, “I argue or speak rudely to others,” and “I enjoy my relationships with family and friends.” Statistically, there was no significant change in scores over time on the IR subscale (see Figure 5). Neither IR nor SP subscales met clinical levels (see Table 4). However, the maximum range for both
exceeded well the above the clinical cut-off of 3. Both subscales had maximum scores as high as 19. However, based on the results of LGM analysis, there was not a significant change while at the academy; meaning those who had high or lower IR scores tended to remain that way over the course of the year. Only the SP subscale showed any meaningful change. It appears social adjustment experiences at the Academy were based on the student’s former experiences socially, their ability to use peers as a source of support or distraction, and their academic demands and priorities.

**Composite: Social Comparison**

The Big Fish Little Pond effect (BFLP) research has generated controversy about how social comparison and environment interact to affect academic self-concept (Huguet, Dumas, Monteil & Genestoux, 2001). Huguet and colleagues (2009) found that “the BFLP has more to do with *how* students compare with their classmates than *with whom* they prefer to compare” (p. 164). This result was consistent with the reports of the interviewees. Some students, who perceived their classmates as studying less and still getting high grades, felt inadequate academically. Both Michelle and Sarah made more negative comparisons. Michelle stated, “I’m putting forth three times more effort to achieve just a teeny bit above what they have.” Sarah said “Some people here are naturally gifted…others like me struggle through it all.” The amount of perceived effort compared to peers affected their self-concept. Other students focused on appreciating individual differences. For instance, John explained “I look at this person has those talents [and] that person has those talents.” John’s outlook helped him feel more comfortable with others’ abilities as well as his own limitations.

Huguet and colleagues (2009) also found, after controlling for individual ability differences, higher absolute comparison level choices among students resulted in higher
academic self-concept for students. Maya commented, "I am sure I’m the dumbest person in my class but I’m happy with that because that means everyone else is doing well." She explained that being associated with a school of relatively smart people made her feel better about herself. Although the BFLPE has been scrutinized (Dai, 2004) because there was an emphasis on the lowered academic self-concept, it is possible to have a range of self-concept outcomes depending on how the individual interprets the social environment. Cross and Swiatek (2009) found that students became slightly more humble in their academic ability in the presence of high ability classmates. The interviewees supported this finding, as none boasted of superior academic prowess. In fact, students were modest overall. For those who were doing well academically, they attributed their achievements to hard work instead of some innate ability. In addition, the students viewed competitive academic banter among students as negative. Daniel reported that making comparisons was something he tried to avoid altogether because it was not helpful.

**Limitations**

The primary limitation was the study’s findings may not generalize to other residential academies. As described in Chapter 1, there are a variety of different types of residential schools with differing philosophies and academic emphases. Other residential schools may not be experienced in the same way as the school reviewed in this study. This should be taken into consideration when examining other residential schools. Nonetheless, the information collected in this study is useful for making comparisons to other residential schools and gifted programs.

In addition, the sustainability of psychological change in this study was unknown. Psychological changes may be a temporal reaction to stress or they might have longstanding effects on how a student thinks or feels. Due to the time frame of the study, students were unable to give an account of how long the academy experience affected them.
Furthermore, there was no representative data of students who withdrew from the school. It would be interesting to investigate the psychological state of students who withdrew versus those who remained. In this sample, only 129 of the 170 juniors admitted graduated as seniors. Those students who chose to withdraw may hold valuable information for comparison of traits or situations prompting students to stay or leave the school. Additionally, there was no direct comparison of residential schools with other gifted programs. Useful information could also be obtained by comparing how residential school students’ experiences differ from in-school gifted programs.

Other demographic information was also not included in this study. For instance, data about race and socioeconomic status was not gathered with the archival data. It was unknown how these factors contributed to differences in psychological outcomes. In addition, academic ability was not assessed in the study. Therefore, it was unknown how academic ability may influence how students adapt to the various challenges of the school.

**Implications for Practice**

Twenty two percent of students \((n = 59)\) scored above the clinical cut-off on the YOQ-SR at the beginning of the academic year. Although the YOQ-SR was not designed to be a screening instrument, this was reflective of the level of distress among some incoming students. It is highly plausible that a portion of these students have participated in some form of mental health treatment before coming to the academy. At the same time, these same students were identified as qualified to attend the school. Due to the inherent challenges of a residential school and the probability students will experience stress, students and parents need to be aware of the resources and support services available to them. The accessibility of these services is paramount because students are preoccupied with academic demands. Administrators and staff need to ensure that
resources not only exist, but that the resources are visible, usable and helpful. This requires services to be well integrated into social and academic environment.

This study provided evidence to support the utility of residential schools; especially among students who are not intellectually stimulated in traditional high school settings. With an awareness of the type of demands and expectations of these schools, residential academies are poised to be one of the most influential types of high school experiences. All of the interviewees reported they would attend the academy again if presented with the opportunity. This study should help inform schools about the experiences of students so administrators are better equipped to create positive experiences for students. This could be accomplished by giving students a more realistic account of what they will encounter over the course of enrollment. This could be accomplished through immersive orientation programs that expose students to the academic and residential community. This could allow students and families to create more realistic expectations for themselves and of the school. This may also help reduce dissonant experiences and improve overall functioning for the students.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

To broaden its applicability, the longitudinal aspect of this study could be extended to include pre- and post-academy experiences of students. Other assessments of functioning such as resiliency (Bland, Sowa & Callahan, 1994; Kitano & Lewis, 2005) and self-concept (Marsh, Kong, & Hau, 2000) could be incorporated to assist in the understanding of how residential schools affect student development. Furthermore, these types of assessments could provide information about the type of attributes that enable students to complete a residential school program. The qualitative aspect helped to enrich the data and should be included in future research. Ideally, assessments could coincide with consecutive interviews using the YOQ-SR.
This would create additional cohesiveness between qualitative and quantitative data collection. Other student characteristics such as race, gender, SES and academic ability could also be collected to examine contributing factors. The challenge will be identifying and maintaining a representative sample. As in this study, future researchers could seek a larger sample for the quantitative data collection or identify a smaller group of individuals for the qualitative data and track them over an extended period of time using outcome assessments.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The primary objective of this study was to understand the psychological changes students experience when attending a residential academy. The findings of this study suggest attending a residential school causes no significant impairment in psychological functioning. Whether high or low, student’s psychological distress level remained fairly stable over time. However, based on how the YOQ-SR scores changed over time and from student interviews, there was evidence to support the notion that students encountered stress at the school, but are able to adapt, returning to equilibrium where he or she was more comfortable. Students modified thoughts (e.g., how they perceive their environment) and/or behaviors (e.g., what they do in the environment) to reach a state of preferred psychological functioning. Based on students’ interviews, participants tended to report an enhanced sense of self during their academy experience. Students felt more equipped to cope with challenges as they reported a sense of growth and preparedness for college. However, there was no data available in this study that assessed functioning before or after enrollment. Therefore, it was unknown what attributes actually changed or if those changes are sustainable. The interview participants were cognizant that their tenure at the academy was short-lived. Students reported making behavior modifications to meet the current academic demands of the environment. It is likely changes in
behaviors such as reductions in leisure time, social activities and sleep habits will recover after graduation. However, it was difficult to predict the lasting mental or cognitive changes that have occurred within the scope of this study. Students reported feeling more prepared for college and described themselves as potentially less developed had they not attended the academy. Though overall psychological distress recuperated, changes such as ability to cope with stress, skill development, knowledge acquisition, self-concept, and the like could endure.

The sample was not large enough to run meaningful analyses when the students were divided into groups based on gender or year in school. However, looking at the quantitative results, it did not appear there was significant influence from gender or class on changes in scores overtime. As can be seen in Figures 8 and 9, females had higher scores than males and the junior class had slightly higher scores than the senior class. Higher scores indicate more symptoms of psychological distress. Each respective group followed a similar trajectory over the course of year. However, the figures need to be interpreted with caution, because there was an underrepresentation of males and seniors when participants were divided based on these categories; this likely lowered the overall mean scores for both. A larger sample of each is needed to make meaningful comparisons of these differences over time. The ANOVA analysis of the initial YOQ-SR scores showed that juniors scored higher than seniors (Table 2), but there was no significant difference between males and females (Table 3) at the beginning of the year.

It is important to keep in mind the majority of students (78%) who took the YOQ-SR scored below the clinical cut-off: The maximum range of scores actually broadened over time even though the sample size decreased ($n = 131$ to 91; see Table 4). At the beginning of the academic year, student scores were comparable to the nonclinical community samples on the YOQ-SR described in Chapter 2. Furthermore, all students were functioning at a level high
enough to be admitted into the school. Using LGM, students showed meaningful changes on 3 subscales of the YOQ-SR: Intrapersonal Distress (ID), Behavior Dysfunction (BD) and Social Problems (SP). These changes, however, did not exceed clinical levels they only demonstrated a change in trajectory after enrollment. The student interviews indicated they were able to regulate the amount of stress experienced at the school by modifying their behaviors or perceptions. Social and academic experiences affected the students and they made psychological changes to adapt. The types of comparisons (i.e., upward or downward) students made with their peers influenced how they adapted. Resilient

In conclusion, as our educational system evolves, understanding the best service options to prepare students for the future is increasingly critical. This study supports the School-Based Conception of Giftedness (Coleman & Cross, 2005) by demonstrating that the type of school environment a student participates in significantly impacts his or her development. Students thrive in a school environment that is best matched to their needs. Given the reported prior experiences and the high ability of students in this study, some of our best students are not being challenged in traditional high school settings. Hence, many students are underprepared to cope with the challenges of higher education and the world of work. Even though students experience transitions earlier in residential schools, how students adapted to these challenges was impressive. Students shifted their behavior and perspective to a mode that enabled them to continue to reach their educational objectives. Students seemed to develop through the process of adapting.

Finally, this study provided evidence that students were able to adapt to the rigorous environment of a residential school without experiencing critical levels of psychological distress. The quantitative results showed that the more a student’s distress increased the more rapidly the
student adjusted to reduce stress over time. In fact, students reported they experienced more psychological benefits by enduring the school’s challenges. The qualitative interviews revealed that students felt the a sense of growth and maturation at the school. Participating in structured and challenging education programs like residential academies, potentially benefits students’ development over time. Overall, by attending the academy, students felt more prepared to cope with the challenges of college and the future.
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Appendix A

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

**Study Title**  Assessing Psychological Changes of Gifted Students in a Residential School

**Study Purpose and Rationale**
The purpose of this study is to examine psychological and behavioral changes gifted students experience when attending a residential school. Findings from this research will help school counselors and administrators learn more about gifted students and how a residential school environment affects them.

**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**
To be eligible to participate in this study, your child must be enrolled as a senior at the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**
For this project, your child will be asked to participate in an individual interview about their experiences at the Indiana Academy. It will take approximately 60 minutes to complete the interview. A follow-up interview maybe needed to help clarify information. The researcher will also utilize data from a questionnaire (YOQ-SR) that has already been collected by the Indiana Academy.

**Audio or Video Tapes**
For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for three years and then be erased.
Data Confidentiality or Anonymity
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data
Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for three years and then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. Only members of the research team will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts
The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that your child may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. Your child will be informed during the assent process that he or she may choose not to answer any question that makes him/her uncomfortable and he/she may quit the study at any time.

Who to Contact Should Your Child Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study
Should your child experience any feelings of anxiety, there are counseling services available to you through Still Waters Professional Counseling Services in Muncie 284-0043.

Benefits
One benefit your child may gain from participating in this study may be to increase personal insight about his/her development and experiences at the Indiana Academy.

Voluntary Participation
Your child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this Parental Permission form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information
For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Study Title  Assessing Psychological Changes of Gifted Students in a Residential School
**Parental Consent**

I give permission for my child to participate in this research project entitled, “Assessing Psychological Changes of Gifted Students in a Residential School.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my permission for my child to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

_________________  _______________
Parent’s Signature   Date

**Child Assent**

The research project has been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand what I am being asked to do as a participant. I agree to participate in the research.

________________________________  ____________________
Child’s Signature                    Date

**Researcher Contact Information**
Appendix B
Recruitment Letter

Dear Academy students,

I am in the process of conducting a research study to understand the adjustment experiences of students who enroll at the Academy. I will be doing interviews, which will be more like in-depth conversations, about how you have been personally affected by attending the Academy. The interviews will take about 60 minutes and there is a possibility of a follow-up meeting if more information is needed for clarification. For your input, you will receive a choice of either 2 Academy Service hours or 2 Wellness hours. Your participation is entirely voluntary and greatly appreciated. If you are interested or would like more information please respond to this email. I have a consent form that will need to be reviewed and signed by you and a parent/legal guardian if you would like to be involved. Thank very much for your participation and support.

Sincerely,

Mr. Marlon R. Rollins, NCC, LMHC
Doctoral Student of Educational Psychology
Appendix C
Interview Transcription “Jane”

CO1: I’m trying to just get an idea from students about how you’ve been affected by coming here. How you feel like you’ve changed, psychologically, what different behaviors you’ve had. Tell me how being at the Academy has affected you since you’ve come.

ST1: Um, I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I’m way better now. I realized that I need to do my homework before I go and hang out with friends or anything like that. It’s my first priority, get done with classes, do my homework, then if I have time I do something else. I think it’s made me a little bit less social than I was at my home school. Because I was really social at my home school and here I just kind of keep to myself, I guess. I have friends, I just don’t, like I don’t know, I’m not of those people who are out every single doing something.

CO2: So it sounds in one respect, you manage your time differently in respect to your work.

ST2: Yeah.

CO3: It’s like can’t wait till last minute to be late. And then you have less time for social, socially, is that something…

ST3: No, I think I have time to do it, it’s just that I choose not to.

CO4: Ok.

ST4: Maybe, I don’t know, it’s just I choose not to be as social sometimes when I’m here, sometimes I would rather kind of read a book while my spare time, instead of just go to the
movies or something. Usually on the weekends I’ll do something social, but during the week I’m kind of homework, just hanging out.

CO5: So you’ve noticed that you spend more time to yourself then with people?

ST6: Yeah.

CO6: Ok.

CO7: What, how do you feel about that?

ST7: I don’t feel bad about it, I’m fine with it. I know it’s kind of the opposite of a lot of other people. I think a lot of people are, like they have so much homework, they just kind of want to escape, want to escape it. So they’re always just down in the lounge, or always out doing something, and it’s kind of the opposite of me I guess,

CO8: When did you notice that begin to happen for you?

ST8: Well, I think, I think it was always like, because I think at first I was just like a little bit afraid of liking here my junior year, then I just kind of kept to myself, then I, like even though I made friends I just kind of just stayed that way.

CO9: Ok.

ST9: Like, I like reading, I like being in my room, I like having all my work done so I don’t have to worry about it at the last minute.

CO10: Ok. So again, yeah I appreciate it because your perspective is really important. I really want to get as much as I can to get an understanding as what it’s like. Let me see…remember a time when you were really stressed now at the Academy and tell me what was happening at that time.

ST10: Well, I was, like I’ve had a lot of family problems so my family is probably my biggest stress even though I’m here.

CO11: Ok.

ST11: I still talk to my family a lot, but that’s another thing I’ve kind of learned while I’ve been here, I guess, is to be able to respectfully deny them the pleasures of venting to me.

CO12: Ok.

ST12: But, I feel like that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of like calm it down and just, when I get stressed I just try to sit down, I try to say, “Ok, it’s fine, this is what I need to do” and I kind of organize it all out in my head when it needs to be done by. Like everything else, if I’m running late on my paper I totally forgot to do it, and it’s 3 days till it’s due, I just can kind of
space it all out and I’ll still be done a day before. So, I’ve learned how to control my stress, I guess.

CO13: Ok. So in different times, whether it’s academic, or whether it’s family or whatever, or what’s going on socially you kind of, it all manages…

ST13: Yeah.

CO14: Ok. That’s really good. Well, tell me what initially motivated you to come to the Academy?

ST14: My aunt wanted me to come to the Academy because I have a crazy quote, unquote, little sister and she wanted me to get away from her. So I decided to come because I was bored at my old school too. I guess, I mean I guess I could say that my aunt always pushed me to come here but there was a part of me that wanted to come otherwise I guess I wouldn’t be here right now. I really, I really love the classes. I love the teachers, the teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay. The teachers and the classes.

CO15: Ok, so you came to kind of get away from your troublesome sister and you came and liked what you had, with what was presented to you, saying it’s worth staying, worth sticking around.

ST15: Yeah.

CO16: Well remember a time for me when you were doing really well and tell me a little bit about what was happening at that time.

ST16: I don’t know, I haven’t…I’ve been doing pretty well for awhile I guess so I think the stress of learning how to manage my stress, I think that’s something that a lot of people here can’t do. And it takes a while for them to learn how to do it. And especially with procrastination, that’s, I’m lucky. I’ve never been a procrastinator. But I find, like the times when I am doing well, is when I have my homework done, I’m on top of things, I’m usually a few days ahead of my homework and I can just relax and do whatever I feel that I want to do. Those are the best times for me.

CO17: Alright, those are good times. How long did you, you kind of mentioned this process to kind of get from not having things managed to having things managed. How long did that take for you?

ST17: It, well, at the beginning of the school year, it was kind of hard because I do have a boyfriend that goes to Burris, so I kind of want to spend a lot of time with that distraction too, so I also have that going on. And, that was hard at the beginning of the year I wanted to do so many other things that I would get behind on my homework and then I would be stressing out about it. And it was just, it took me probably about 3 weeks to finally get in my head, “Be stressed, or hang with your boyfriend all the time”, and it’s just kind of like I’ve learned that you gotta give and take a little bit everywhere and, I mean my boyfriend is not my first priority so I might as
well do my schoolwork first and hang out with him when I can. And, it just so happened to be that he has baseball too in this exact same way so everything just kind of fell into place. Again, kind of lucky, but it all worked out.

CO18: So when you start managing it all, it seems to work, and you’ve been doing really well here recently having everything…

ST18: Yeah.

CO19: How would you think you would be different if you did not come to the Academy?

ST19: I think that I would be very naïve about the course load that I would get at the colleges I am applying to. I feel I wouldn’t have opened up a lot of the opportunities I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives. I feel that being here at the Academy I am being taught, like sorta the way our teachers teach, they teach a higher education that my teachers at home do. They go more into depth. Even things with set curriculums like AP Chemistry I feel though, like even though it’s a set curriculum, I feel like we dive deeper into the set topics than I would at my home school. I also feel like if I was at my home school I wouldn’t put as much effort into my school work because I was getting a 4.0 at my home school without doing anything outside of school, I would just do my homework in class and that was it. And I do think I would probably be swimming and diving still, so that I kind of miss from my old school because it’s not really available here. But, overall, I feel like it was a good transition. So…

CO20: It was worth the trade. Some sacrifices you made, it was easier at your home high school, you’ve got more challenges here academically, but the challenges, you feel like it’s preparing you for…

ST20: I like challenges.

CO21: Right, right. Sounds like you’ve taken it in stride too on different levels, so that’s really good. So it sounds like you’ll be able to thrive pretty well.

ST21: I hope so.

CO22: I hope so. I hope so. Well, how do you feel like, and this is more of like a social question, how do you feel like you compare to your peers here at this school?

ST22: I feel that the juniors are way smarter than our class is, in general. I feel like that there are a lot of kids that are way more serious about their schoolwork, than maybe I am, which I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing, because I always do my best to get mine done but yet, maybe a more serious and stressed they go together. But I feel, I feel that a lot of the people here are centered around academics and a few of them also have athletics going on or other things going on, but, I don’t know, I don’t think I’m the smartest person ever. And, I feel like a lot of people around here probably raise themselves up a little bit with their academics. That’s not the first thing I’m going to tell someone is, “Oh, I’m smart, this where I’m applying, this school.
This is my GPA.” And I know a lot kids are like that. They sit down, it’s the first thing they exchange. So, I think I’m probably more of a laid back person who just kind of goes with the flow of everyone else and watches it all happen and then does their own thing.

CO23: So, but you have observed the differences…

ST:23 Oh yeah. Definitely.

CO24: As far as when people are stressed, and what they’re focused on academically.

ST24: It’s a totally different personality type. And, I feel that there are a lot of people here who are so, like, it’s a good thing because, yeah, they would probably get higher grades in the courses than I am getting. I still have a 3.94 GPA which is good for me, but the thing is, is like I feel that some kids get so worked up about getting, failing that one quiz, that they just stress and stress and stress and they’ll work on that and they don’t really focus on everything else that is going on around them. Because academics is a huge part of my life but it’s not the whole thing and that’s something I’ve managed to realize I guess.

CO25: Ok. Well noticing those differences within your peers, how has it affected your academic achievement?

ST25: Um, I guess it makes me work a little bit harder because I see how like, how uptight people are about their grades. I’m like, “Ok, I need to do good otherwise I’m going to be looked at as stupid because everyone else aced this test and I didn’t.” But, I mean, I guess it just showed me that people learn differently and people are good at different things. And just because someone else got a 98 on a test and I did poorly on the same test, doesn’t mean that they’re necessarily smarter than me. So, and also being here, it’s made me realize that there are a lot of kids that are really good in one subject, like they have their core subject and yet there’s other kids that are just pretty good at them all.

CO26: Ok.

ST26: So, I think that’s something kind of cool, is that the kids here aren’t like just focused on, well some of them are focused in one area but, a lot of them just naturally succeed in everything they try.

CO27: Ok. It seems to be that way. What did you see in your peers before you came to the Academy?

ST27: At my old school?

CO28: At your old school.

ST28: Um, a lot of people who didn’t care, I guess. I remember my AP Biology class, my sophomore year, there was 7 of us. There was 3, 3 seniors, 2 sophomores and 2 juniors and I remember that 2 juniors quit after the first trimester, because we were on trimesters. And then
there was just a bunch of people who like didn’t try at all. And I mean, that was good for me because it just curved up our grades, our scores, I guess, on our tests. But, there was a lot of people who just didn’t care about their academics. And same thing with my peers I guess, that go to Burris, my friends at Burris, some of them, “Oh, I got a D, that’s great.” And, that’s it. Don’t think about it ever again.

CO29: Right.

ST29: So, I mean, I guess that is kind of, I’m kind of like that. If I get a bad test score, I don’t let it really affect me if I’m like, “Oh, that’s something I need to work on.” So I guess I’ll kind of go over that but it’s just a really big difference between being here at the Academy and being at a public school or school where there’s a lot of people who don’t care about their academics at all.

CO30: Did that affect you in any kind of way as far as what you would do, what you strive to do?

ST30: No, not at all because I’ve been used to that. Um, ever since second grade in my community they send the brightest kids to the school with the worst test scores. So I was sent to a school called Roosevelt, which was on academic probation. No one, no one cared at all. So I was used to being around those kids yet I was used to also, I was also used to in the classroom setting being able to do my work. So it’s totally different for me being in the classroom or doing my homework or studying and being outside of the classroom. And that’s another thing that I feel that some Academy students can’t do. It’s different from inside the classroom to outside the classroom. I think it’s a very big difference. When you want to go hang out with your friends you shouldn’t have to worry about all the stuff that’s going on inside the classroom I guess.

CO31: Well tell me more about that inside/outside classroom.

ST31: Inside, like when I’m inside the classroom, I’m focused. I know, like it’s time to put away my cell phone, it’s time to focus on what’s at hand, try to figure out what’s going on. And when I’m outside the classroom it’s kind of more, “Ok, I know I have to do all this while I’m outside the classroom, this is the block of time I’m going to do that in.” But, say if I’m socializing or something else, usually I’m not sitting there worried about a test or complaining to them about how much homework I have or things like that, which I feel that a lot of us do without even realizing it because it’s just like you’re just so stressed and I feel that some kids can’t like relieve that stress. That when they’re doing other things, which they should be able to do. So, I feel that, I guess that’s the one downfall of the Academy is that academics are so, like, the main focus, that kids often get lost in their social activities because they’re so worried. And that just follows through with everything. It’s like, “Ok, I’m sitting here with my friends, at dinner, and I’m freaking out because I have this test.” And the thing is, I guess that’s another time management thing too. You’re freaking out about a test, you’re probably should be studying instead of socializing to begin with. So, it’s, I think that’s a very big deal to me, being able to control those two different, I guess selves.

CO32: Right, the in and out. Sometimes when you’re at school it’s like you’re always in.
ST32: Yeah, exactly.

CO33: Yeah, that can really cause crazy problems for you I guess, stresswise. Never know how to turn it off or…

ST33: And I find that kids here are very competitive about everything. Even today, I was sitting at lunch with my roommate, you know how my roommate is, and we were talking to a kid who’s also in my AP Chem class. And, earlier I was talking to my AP Chem teacher, Dr. Adams, and he was like, “We’ve given you guys a harder curriculum than we’ve given any other AP Chem class.” And he was like, “We expect a lot out of you, we made the first exam like five times harder; we’re going to make everything harder.” And he said, “This is the way it’s going to be. We’re going to give you a quiz everyday.” And I was sitting there with my roommate who is, who took AP Chem last year and I was talking to this kid about this and I was like, “Don’t feel down on yourself for how a senior from a previous year, how he was doing in compared to you because Dr. Adams told me this was a lot harder and it was going to be a lot harder to do well so don’t feel bad if you’re not doing as great as you think you’re going to do, it just takes some time to get used to learning at such a fast pace and everything.” And my roommate didn’t like what I said, because of course she was in the AP Chem class last year and she was like, “No, it wasn’t harder at all.” And that’s just, it’s just little things like that sometimes just, if someone even hints that they might be a teeny bit smarter than you can just spark someone. And it can just cause an argument, and I think that’s crazy because I never had to experience that at my old school because as far as I knew, no one knew I was in Honors classes, no one knew I was in AP classes, except for if they were in my classes. So that’s the thing, people brag about their academics so much. And that’s like, them. That’s, it’s just so different.

CO34: Why do you think people do that?

ST34: Because I feel that’s how, I don’t know, everyone brags a little bit about what they’re good at or what they have that someone else doesn’t have and it makes them feel good inside I guess. And so, I mean, I understand it and I know sometimes I do it and usually I catch myself but sometimes I’m like, “Oh yeah I’m…” and sometimes I don’t even mean to do it. Like someone asked me where I’m applying to college and I like list good colleges and sometimes to them that comes off as bragging. So it just, it depends on who you are talking to. But, it’s just like, that very fine line, that if you touch it someone from the Academy would like go off because they think you’re calling them stupid you may have, it might not have even been in your head that you could have done that. But…

CO35: So you see that happening more here at the Academy?

ST35: Oh yeah.

CO36: Now you had mentioned too that you, like at your former school you were brought in there because to bring, I guess, like the overall average up.

ST36: Yeah.
CO37: Generally, the kids didn’t know that you were an Honors student?

ST37: Oh, elementary school, they did. Only because the school was probably about…I don’t know, it was just very obvious because there were classes, we would move up together as a class, no one else would be brought inside this class. So it was obvious and they called us the “Pep Kids”, because we were providing for education potential. But, none of the elementary school kids really knew what was going on. We had PEP all the way into middle school, but then it reached out to every middle school because all of our middle schools were doing bad.

CO38: Ok.

ST38: And then when you go into high school you start your Honors classes and no one knew I was in Honors classes all through high school. Well now, they do. But, even like half of the kids I’m still friends with are oblivious to like the academic that go on here, because compared to my other school they just think I moved down to_____ and I’m going to school here and it’s kind of like a boarding school and I just let them go along with that because that’s fine to me.

CO39: But that competition, that type of competition wasn’t there at your old high school?

ST39: It was a little bit to a group of kids. So like, the top 5 kids in the class, there was that competition and the thing was is that we all have been in the same class since we were in second grade. So there was that competition, but since we had been with each other since second grade it was kind of a more friendly competition. We knew that if no one else really knew we were smart, so we didn’t care and we would make jokes about each other. But, that’s the closest the competition really got there.

CO40: And here it’s, you just really see a lot of that on a larger scale.

ST40: Yeah. Exactly. Everyone knows everyone else’s grades. Like that’s just how it is, “Oh, this kid has an 88 in AP Chem, that’s so high! This kid has a 99 in this!” And everyone knows your grades, you tell one person then everyone knows, at least from that class.

CO:41 Ok. And you had mentioned too that you didn’t, that being around this group has kind of made you work harder to a certain degree.

ST41: Yeah. Exactly, because…

CO42: You say you don’t want to be stupid.

ST42: I don’t want anyone like, I don’t want to get the worst grade in the class. I mean I’m fine with a medium grade and I’m very happy if I have one of the highest grades. But the thing is, is that people also talk about how other kids shouldn’t be here, and I’ve heard that many times. Like this person shouldn’t have ever came to the Academy. And I’m like, “If they heard you say that how, I mean how bad would they feel?” And I’m just kind of a person who just kind of listens and doesn’t tell anyone else because I don’t want to get in trouble. But, I hear that a lot
because a lot of people come to me and tell me things because I’m not going to go and tell everyone else.

CO43: Right, I see. OK.

ST43: That’s my problem!

CO44: A problem. So maybe you should start telling everybody,

ST44: So then no one comes to me with their problems!

CO45: Right. That’s an interesting strategy. Well good. No, that helps. I appreciate that. You said some really good things. I mean, overall it sounds like it’s been a good experience for you.

ST45: Yeah. I enjoy it. I mean, it’s definitely, definitely a different lifestyle. I feel like it’s preparing me for college in a lot of ways, but I also feel like it may, I feel there’s a lot of ways the Academy could better prepare kids for college. But academically, yeah. It was definitely the right thing for me to do.

CO46: What else do you think that Academy could do?

ST46: I feel like the Academy…the Academy offers a lot of freedom, I think, but in like the exact opposite way from being home. But I think that in order, it to be more like a college life, where there’s not going to be those boundaries, like I understand kids have to come in so late at night, but the thing is, is that, that’s not going to happen. And these, who’ve been on this strict time coming in every night get to college, they’re not going to be in till 5 in the morning, have to wake up, go to class…it’s just…I know it’s going to happen, I mean, that’s something I’ve realized. Because I’ve never had really a curfew at my house. My mom was always working so I would just be like, “Mom, I’m doing this with my friends tonight. I’ll be home around midnight.” And then it might be like 1:30 and I actually get home I’m like, “Oh, I should probably go to sleep because I have swimming and school the next day.” And, it was never a problem for me because I always got my work done at school, but I know that, if, like a lot of kids here if they’re planning on going into very hard programs of study where they’re going to have a lot of homework, they’re going to have a lot of study, they’re going to have a lot of research, wherever they’re getting themselves into. And I feel like it’s going to be a lot at once. They’re totally free and they can come and go as they please and everything else.

CO47: Alright, like not having the rules in place.

ST47: Yes. And also, I feel like, like I love how the teachers are around here and that’s one of the reasons why I’m going to like a smaller college, but I think they’re going to be in shock, when they see that some of their teachers aren’t going to help them. They’re going to send them to Teacher’s Assistants and they’re going to be like, “Oh, read this page,” and walk away from you. And I know, because we have so much one-on-one time with our teachers that that’s going to be a huge difference unless you go to one of the smaller, liberal arts only undergraduate
colleges, which a lot of people aren’t going to go to. Most of them, well I mean, there’s Brown, but a lot kids here I know are striving to go to Ivy League schools.

CO48: So the Academy itself, how it’s structured may not meet the reality of colleges, depending where you go.

ST48: Yes. It’s a great program and it’s great for night now but I think, it’s going to be, I think it’s going to be a smaller shock than it would be going from home to college but I still think it’s going to be a large shock just in a very different way. They already got the shock of their mom not cooking them dinner all the time and having to make their own food or eat crappy college food. But, it’s going to be those time management skills I think that, because the Academy is procrastination. You don’t have a bedtime. You have to go to sleep so...There’s kids who will stay up all night playing video games and then got papers due at 9:00 the next morning and they’re typing up at 7.

CO49: (Sigh) Wow.

ST49: So...I mean some parents do step in. I’ve heard of parents who come and they take their kid’s laptop away from them, here. And, I think, I mean I think that’s good. I just think it’s a different shock.

CO50: Yeah, it’s going to be another adjustment. I see what you’re saying.

ST50: Yeah.

CO51: Well, you have a lot of good insights. You made some good observations about this environment and how you fit in it. Is there anything else you want to say or add?

ST51: No, not really. I don’t know what to say.

CO52: No, that’s good. No, you said a lot of good things, I appreciate it. Well that’s all the questions I have for you now. Again, you were very helpful.

ST52: Ok.
1. Listing and preliminary grouping of meaningful statements

- I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I’m way better now.
- I think it’s made me a little bit less social than I was at my home school. Because I was really social at my home school and here I just kind of keep to myself, I guess.
- I think a lot of people are, like they have so much homework, they just kind of want to escape, want to escape it. So they’re always just down in the lounge, or always out doing something, and it’s kind of the opposite of me I guess,
- I think it was always like, because I think at first I was just like a little bit afraid of liking here my junior year, then I just kind of kept to myself, then I, like even though I made friends I just kind of just stayed that way.
- I’ve had a lot of family problems so my family is probably my biggest stress even though I’m here.
- I feel like that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of like calm it down and just, when I get stressed I just try to sit down,
- I’ve learned how to control my stress, I guess.
- My aunt wanted me to come to the Academy because I have a crazy quote, unquote, little sister and she wanted me to get away from her.
- I really, I really love the classes. I love the teachers, the teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay. The teachers and the classes.
- I think the stress of learning how to manage my stress, I think that’s something that a lot of people here can’t do.
- I’m on top of things, I’m usually a few days ahead of my homework and I can just relax and do whatever I feel that I want to do. Those are the best times for me.
- I’ve learned that you gotta give and take a little bit everywhere
I think that I would be very naïve about the course load that I would get at the colleges I am applying to. I feel I wouldn’t have opened up a lot of the opportunities I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives. I feel that being here at the Academy I am being taught, like sort of the way our teachers teach, they teach a higher education that my teachers at home do. They go more into depth.

I feel that the juniors are way smarter than our class is, in general. I feel like that there are a lot of kids that are way more serious about their schoolwork, than maybe I am, which I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing, because I always do my best to get mine done but yet, maybe a more serious and stressed they go together.

I think I’m probably more of a laid back person who just kind of goes with the flow of everyone else and watches it all happen and then does their own thing.

Because academics is a huge part of my life but it’s not the whole thing and that’s something I’ve managed to realize I guess.

I guess it makes me work a little bit harder because I see how like, how uptight people are about their grades. I’m like, “Ok, I need to do good otherwise I’m going to be looked at as stupid because everyone else aced this test and I didn’t.” But, I mean, I guess it just showed me that people learn differently and people are good at different things. And just because someone else got a 98 on a test and I did poorly on the same test, doesn’t mean that they’re necessarily smarter than me. So, and also being here, it’s made me realize that there are a lot of kids that are really good in one subject, like they have their core subject and yet there’s other kids that are just pretty good at them all.

I think that’s something kind of cool, is that the kids here aren’t like just focused on, well some of them are focused in one area but, a lot of them just naturally succeed in everything they try.

There was just a bunch of people who like didn’t try at all. And I mean, that was good for me because it just curved up our grades, our scores, I guess, on our tests. But, there was a lot of people who just didn’t care about their academics.

I guess I’ll kind of go over that but it’s just a really big difference between being here at the Academy and being at a public school or school where there’s a lot of people who don’t care about their academics at all.

So it’s totally different for me being in the classroom or doing my homework or studying and being outside of the classroom. And that’s another thing that I feel that some Academy students can’t do. It’s different from inside the classroom to outside the classroom. I think it’s a very big difference. When you want to go hang out with your friends you shouldn’t have to worry about all the stuff that’s going on inside the classroom I guess.

I guess that’s the one downfall of the Academy is that academics are so, like, the main focus, that kids often get lost in their social activities because they’re so worried.

And I find that kids here are very competitive about everything.

If someone even hints that they might be a teeny bit smarter than you can just spark someone. And it can just cause an argument, and I think that’s crazy because I never had to experience that at my old school because as far as I knew, no one knew I was in Honors classes, no one knew I was in AP classes, except for if they were in my classes. So that’s the thing, people brag about their academics so much. And that’s like, them. That’s, it’s just so different.
Everyone brags a little bit about what they’re good at or what they have that someone else doesn’t have and it makes them feel good inside I guess. And so, I mean, I understand it and I know sometimes I do it and usually I catch myself but sometimes I’m like, “Oh yeah I’m…” and sometimes I don’t even mean to do it.

I don’t want to get the worst grade in the class. I mean I’m fine with a medium grade and I’m very happy if I have one of the highest grades. But the thing is, is that people also talk about how other kids shouldn’t be here, and I’ve heard that many times. Like this person shouldn’t have ever came to the Academy. And I’m like, “If they heard you say that how, I mean how bad would they feel?”

I mean, it’s definitely, definitely a different lifestyle. I feel like it’s preparing me for college in a lot of ways, but I also feel like it may, I feel there’s a lot of ways the Academy could better prepare kids for college. But academically, yeah. It was definitely the right thing for me to do.

I feel like the Academy…the Academy offers a lot of freedom, I think, but in like the exact opposite way from being home.

I feel like, like I love how the teachers are around here and that’s one of the reasons why I’m going to like a smaller college,

It’s a great program and it’s great for night now but I think, it’s going to be, I think it’s going to be a smaller shock than it would be going from home to college but I still think it’s going to be a large shock just in a very different way. They already got the shock of their mom not cooking them dinner all the time and having to make their own food or eat crappy college food. But, it’s going to be those time management skills I think that, because the Academy is procrastination.

2. Reduction and elimination

- **Organization/time management skills**
  - I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I’m way better now.

- **Narrowing social group**
  - I think it’s made me a little bit less social than I was at my home school. Because I was really social at my home school and here I just kind of keep to myself, I guess.

- **Isolation from others**
  - I think it was always like, because I think at first I was just like a little bit afraid of liking here my junior year, then I just kind of kept to myself, then I, like even though I made friends I just kind of just stayed that way.

- **Changes in stress management**
  - I feel like that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of like calm it down and just, when I get stressed I just try to sit down,
  - I’ve learned how to control my stress.
  - I think the stress of learning how to manage my stress, I think that’s something that a lot of people here can’t do.

- **Admiration for teachers**
  - I really, I really love the classes. I love the teachers, the teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay. The teachers and the classes.
• I feel like, like I love how the teachers are around here and that’s one of the reasons why I’m going to like a smaller college.

• **Optimism about academic future**
  • I think that I would be very naïve about the course load that I would get at the colleges I am applying to. I feel I wouldn’t have opened up a lot of the opportunities.
  • I mean, it’s definitely, definitely a different lifestyle. I feel like it’s preparing me for college in a lot of ways, but I also feel like it may, I feel there’s a lot of ways the Academy could better prepare kids for college. But academically, yeah. It was definitely the right thing for me to do.
  • It’s a great program and it’s great for night now but I think, it’s going to be, I think it’s going to be a smaller shock than it would be going from home to college but I still think it’s going to be a large shock just in a very different way.

• **Changes in thinking style**
  • I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives.

• **Experiencing the course material**
  • I feel that being here at the Academy I am being taught, like sort of the way our teachers teach, they teach a higher education that my teachers at home do. They go more into depth.

• **Upward or downward comparison**
  • I feel that the juniors are way smarter than our class is, in general. I feel like that there are a lot of kids that are way more serious about their schoolwork, than maybe I am, which I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing, because I always do my best to get mine done but yet, maybe a more serious and stressed they go together.
  • Everyone brags a little bit about what they’re good at or what they have that someone else doesn’t have and it makes them feel good inside I guess. And so, I mean, I understand it and I know sometimes I do it.
  • I don’t want to get the worst grade in the class. I mean I’m fine with a medium grade and I’m very happy if I have one of the highest grades. But the thing is, is that people also talk about how other kids shouldn’t be here, and I’ve heard that many times. Like this person shouldn’t have ever came to the Academy. And I’m like, “If they heard you say that how, I mean how bad would they feel?”

• **Sense of personal growth**
  • Because academics is a huge part of my life but it’s not the whole thing and that’s something I’ve managed to realize I guess.

• **Influenced by others behavior**
  • I guess it makes me work a little bit harder because I see how like, how uptight people are about their grades.

• **Recognizing individual differences**
  • So, and also being here, it’s made me realize that there are a lot of kids that are really good in one subject, like they have their core subject and yet there’s other kids that are just pretty good at them all.
  • I think that’s something kind of cool, is that the kids here aren’t like just focused on, well some of them are focused in one area but, a lot of them just naturally succeed in everything they try.
• **Feeling dissimilar to former peer groups**
  o There was just a bunch of people who like didn’t try at all. And I mean, that was good for me because it just curved up our grades, our scores, I guess, on our tests. But, there was a lot of people who just didn’t care about their academics.
  o I guess I’ll kind of go over that but it’s just a really big difference between being here at the Academy and being at a public school or school where there’s a lot of people who don’t care about their academics at all.

• **Peer observations**
  o And I find that kids here are very competitive about everything.
  o If someone even hints that they might be a teeny bit smarter than you can just spark someone. And it can just cause an argument, and I think that’s crazy because I never had to experience that at my old school because as far as I knew, no one knew I was in Honors classes, no one knew I was in AP classes, except for if they were in my classes. So that’s the thing, people brag about their academies so much. And that’s like, them. That’s, it’s just so different.
  o I guess that’s the one downfall of the Academy is that academics are so, like, the main focus, that kids often get lost in their social activities because they’re so worried.
  o I think a lot of people are, like they have so much homework, they just kind of want to escape, want to escape it. So they’re always just down in the lounge, or always out doing something, and it’s kind of the opposite of me I guess.
  o That’s another thing that I feel that some Academy students can’t do. It’s different from inside the classroom to outside the classroom. I think it’s a very big difference. When you want to go hang out with your friends you shouldn’t have to worry about all the stuff that’s going on inside the classroom I guess.

• **Increased sense of freedom**
  o I feel like the Academy…the Academy offers a lot of freedom, I think, but in like the exact opposite way from being home.

  I think I’m probably more of a laid back person who just kind of goes with the flow of everyone else and watches it all happen and then does their own thing.

  I’m on top of things, I’m usually a few days ahead of my homework and I can just relax and do whatever I feel that I want to do. Those are the best times for me.

  I’ve learned that you gotta give and take a little bit everywhere

  I’ve had a lot of family problems so my family is probably my biggest stress even though I’m here.

  My aunt wanted me to come to the Academy because I have a crazy quote, unquote, little sister and she wanted me to get away from her.

3. Clustering and Thematizing of Invariant Constituents
• Psychological Change
  o Organization/time management skills
    ▪ I feel like even though I was pretty good at time management before, I’m way better now.
  o Increased sense of freedom
    ▪ I feel like the Academy…the Academy offers a lot of freedom, I think, but in like the exact opposite way from being home.
  o Changes in stress management
    ▪ I feel like that I’ve learned to take stress and kind of like calm it down and just, when I get stressed I just try to sit down.
    ▪ I’ve learned how to control my stress.
    ▪ I think the stress of learning how to manage my stress, I think that’s something that a lot of people here can’t do.
  o Changes in thinking style
    ▪ I’ve had to learn in different ways and to take on different perspectives.
  o Optimism about academic future
    ▪ I think that I would be very naïve about the course load that I would get at the colleges I am applying to. I feel I wouldn’t have opened up a lot of the opportunities.
    ▪ I mean, it’s definitely, definitely a different lifestyle. I feel like it’s preparing me for college in a lot of ways, but I also feel like it may, I feel there’s a lot of ways the Academy could better prepare kids for college. But academically, yeah. It was definitely the right thing for me to do.
    ▪ It’s a great program and it’s great for night now but I think, it’s going to be, I think it’s going to be a smaller shock than it would be going from home to college but I still think it’s going to be a large shock just in a very different way.

• Academic Adjustment
  o Admiration for teachers
    ▪ I really, I really love the classes. I love the teachers, the teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay. The teachers and the classes.
    ▪ I feel like, like I love how the teachers are around here and that’s one of the reasons why I’m going to like a smaller college.
  o Experiencing the course material
    ▪ I feel that being here at the Academy I am being taught, like sort of the way our teachers teach, they teach a higher education that my teachers at home do. They go more into depth.

• Social Adjustment
  o Narrowing social group
    ▪ I think it’s made me a little bit less social than I was at my home school. Because I was really social at my home school and here I just kind of keep to myself, I guess.
  o Isolation from others
- I think it was always like, because I think at first I was just a little bit afraid of liking here my junior year, then I just kind of kept to myself, then I, like even though I made friends I just kind of just stayed that way.
  - Feeling dissimilar to former peer groups
    - There was just a bunch of people who like didn’t try at all. And I mean, that was good for me because it just curved up our grades, our scores, I guess, on our tests. But, there was a lot of people who just didn’t care about their academics.
    - I guess I’ll kind of go over that but it’s just a really big difference between being here at the Academy and being at a public school or school where there’s a lot of people who don’t care about their academics at all.

- Social Comparison
  - Upward or downward comparison
    - I feel that the juniors are way smarter than our class is, in general. I feel like that there are a lot of kids that are way more serious about their schoolwork, than maybe I am, which I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing, because I always do my best to get mine done but yet, maybe a more serious and stressed they go together.
    - Everyone brags a little bit about what they’re good at or what they have that someone else doesn’t have and it makes them feel good inside I guess. And so, I mean, I understand it and I know sometimes I do it.
    - I don’t want to get the worst grade in the class. I mean I’m fine with a medium grade and I’m very happy if I have one of the highest grades.
  - Influenced by others behavior
    - I guess it makes me work a little bit harder because I see how like, how uptight people are about their grades.
  - Recognizing individual differences
    - So, and also being here, it’s made me realize that there are a lot of kids that are really good in one subject, like they have their core subject and yet there’s other kids that are just pretty good at them all.
    - I think that’s something kind of cool, is that the kids here aren’t like just focused on, well some of them are focused in one area but, a lot of them just naturally succeed in everything they try.
  - Peer observations
    - And I find that kids here are very competitive about everything.
    - If someone even hints that they might be a teeny bit smarter than you can just spark some one. It’s just so different.
    - I guess that’s the one downfall of the Academy is that academics are so, like, the main focus, that kids often get lost in their social activities because they’re so worried.
    - I think a lot of people are, like they have so much homework, they just kind of want to escape, want to escape it. So they’re always just down in the lounge, or always out doing something, and it’s kind of the opposite of me I guess.
    - That’s another thing that I feel that some Academy students can’t do. It’s different from inside the classroom to outside the classroom. I think it’s a
very big difference. When you want to go hang out with your friends you shouldn’t have to worry about all the stuff that’s going on inside the classroom I guess.

4. Final Identification of Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application

Invariants Constituents were verified for consistency across all interviews. Compatible expressions were included in the final descriptions.

5. Individual Textural Description

For Jane, the Academy experience was an escape from a hectic home environment. It was a transitioning place for her to ready for college without the strain and distraction of a tumultuous sibling. At the academy, she was able to control with whom and how she interacted. Her schoolwork was placed at the forefront of her objectives. Conversely, she witnessed her peers enmeshed in their social time as a means to avoid homework. For her, socializing was perceived as a stumbling block, one that she quickly learned to step over. She admitted she converted into a more avoidant social mode to increase productivity. Nonetheless, she was able to maintain relationships with a boyfriend, her family, and a small group of friends. She learned how to separate her social life from her academic life. By keeping up with her work, she connected with family and friends without worrying about her classes. She developed a method of balancing time from one thing to meet the demands of another. She noticed her peers struggled finding this balance and were plagued by procrastination.

Jane fell in the love with the teachers and classes at the academy. She enjoyed their enthusiasm and depth. Her experienced helped her to reshape her hopes for the future. She said, “I really, I really love the classes. I love the teachers, the teachers are amazing so that’s the reason I kind of did come and stay.” She sought a smaller more intimate college environment to replicate her experience at the academy.

6. Individual Structural Description

Jane discovered that she was more adaptable to the academy environment compared to her home surroundings. Overtime, she became more in sync with the academy. She understood how to operate at an optimal level. Her outlook improved and her time management skills excelled. The school provided her with a superior structure wherein she could exercise her strengths. Jane was especially observant of her peers. She noticed their competiveness, adjourning and unevenness of methods. She was able to reflect her personal shortcoming off the behaviors of others. Her observation helped her better regulate how she interacted social and academically. Jane’s orientation for the
future was clearer and optimistic. The academy experience allowed her to hone her academic skills and provided her with a greater sense of control. She seemed particularly purposeful about her agenda and how she went about accomplishing it.

7. Textural-Structural Description

See Chapter 4 for this report.

Appendix E
Ball State University Institutional Review Board Approval

1 - Generated on IRBNet

Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 21, 2009

TO: Marlon Rollins

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 112951-1
TITLE: Assessing Psychological Changes of Gifted Students in a Residential High School
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: October 21, 2009
EXPIRATION DATE: October 20, 2010
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

The Institutional Review Board has approved your New Project for the above protocol, effective October 21, 2009 through October 20, 2010. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission. As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:
• when the project is completed,
• if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
• if the project is to be modified,
• if the project encounters problems, or
• if the project is discontinued.
Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Amy Boos at (765) 285-5034 or akboos@bsu.edu.