

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS, PERSPECTIVES,  
AND  
SCHOOL-BASED HELPING

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by

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## Abstract

This study describes a two-phase research project focused on English adolescents in full-time education, which set out to answer five main questions. These asked how secondary school students perceived themselves, how they perceived the helping resources of their school, what were their preferences in helping situations, what was their experience of teacher support, and how far professional contact was a threat to their self-esteem.

The mixed-sex samples involved were each composed of equal numbers of males and females. In the first phase of the enquiry, a multiple-choice questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of 540 students of 13-15 years old from three urban and three rural secondary schools. In the second phase, 60 students from a seventh suburban secondary school were exposed to two contrasting treatment conditions. This experiment was set up to test the robustness of the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis amongst adolescent help-seekers in a real-world context.

In the survey phase, most students indicated that they had few personal problems, and were proactive in dealing with those that existed. However, one third or more reported that, in order of importance, they would be likely to need help with their career, schoolwork, relationships, money, and their feelings. Helping resources were most likely to be selected on the basis of established relationships, and favoured friends or parents over teachers or other professional helpers. Remote sources of assistance, such as a

national telephone helpline, were very poorly supported as an initial response to personal problems.

The majority of adolescents preferred to seek help for themselves, as opposed to having it arranged by parents, friends, or teachers. Substantial support emerged for a same-sex helper, and for one-to-one meetings, rather than group or telephone support. There was also a frequent adolescent requirement for helper suggestions. For the minority of students who actually had received teacher support, high levels of satisfaction and problem resolution were recorded. Yet despite generally positive outcomes, the survey findings nonetheless called into question certain conventional counselling practices.

The experimental phase exposed self-selecting age and sex-matched students to either a personal-emphasis or an educational-emphasis treatment of equal duration, each incorporating direct before-and-after measures of self esteem. No significant differences between pre- and post-treatment self-esteem scores were obtained, indicating that no threat to student self-esteem was generated by either treatment. This outcome was interpreted as having implications for the utility of the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis for adolescent help-seekers in the context of their schools.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“The presence or absence of significant adults within the school setting may have a critical impact on the value of the school experience for the teacher and the adolescent. The research literature suggests that the adolescent’s relationships with important adults may be crucial for fostering healthy development.” (Galbo 1989: 549.)

## **A Rationale For The Study Of Adolescent Opinion**

### Arguments From Review Articles

Although adolescents are direct recipients of school-based helping, there is limited evidence of research interest in their opinion of helping interventions. For example, Campbell's (1965) review of the counselling literature, while discussing 21 studies of college students and one of other adults, covered only four investigations involving high-school students. Likewise, an early review of research on child psychotherapy, carried out by Barrett, Hampe, & Miller, (1978) made no mention of clients' perceptions of their psychotherapy experience, and did not specifically address adolescent issues. The later Smith, Glass, and Miller (1980) meta-analysis on the findings of psychotherapy research, suggests that this oversight has often been repeated. Out of a total of 420 studies incorporated in this particular analysis, just 32 (8%) referred to research carried out with samples of adolescents at the secondary stage of their education, and not one of these studies investigated the opinions of the young people involved.

More recent reviews, by Casey & Burman (1985) and Durlak, Fuhrman & Lampman (1991) have shown concern for the quality of research outcomes within the child population, but have neither incorporated the adolescent age-group, nor represented consumer opinion. Although Weisz, Weiss, & Donenberg (1992) examined 200 controlled outcome studies which included both younger children and adolescents,

as in other reviews, the recipient's perspective did not form the focus of attention. Similarly, a recent review of strategic needs in counselling research (Greenberg, 1986) made no mention of adolescent perception. McLeod (1990) asserted that hardly anyone has asked clients what they think about the help that they have received. However, this review included only thirteen studies, none of which incorporated the views of secondary students.

Across a period of almost thirty years, reviews of the literature suggest that school-based concerns of students at the secondary level of their education appear to be inadequately represented. Yet adolescent perceptions of personal status represent a useful source of information in helping situations. They may also be of broader theoretical significance.

According to Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1984) research demonstrates that mental health professionals view normal adolescents as markedly more disturbed than the young people involved perceived themselves to be. Nor is the margin of error a small one, since professionals apparently deem normal teenagers to have more problems than either emotionally disturbed or delinquent adolescents actually exhibit. The evidence suggests that mental-health professionals erroneously label normal adolescents as being more defensive, more sensitive, more tense, more socially ill-at-ease, more resentful of criticism, and more easily hurt than young people themselves indicate. Moreover, while professional judgements were shown to over-estimate the emotionality of adolescents under normal circumstances, they also under-estimated the number of normal adolescents who experience extremes of emotion. The authors conclude that professional perceptions of normal adolescents resemble the self-descriptions of

disturbed teenagers more closely than they do the self-descriptions of normal adolescents (Offer et al, 1984). Findings like these suggest there may be a need to ground professional knowledge more securely in the study of adolescent perception.

### Arguments From Recent Legal and Policy Developments

The views of consumers now carry a degree of importance that was previously unparalleled, and which needs to be recognised in the delivery of most services, whether individual or corporate, private or public. This thrust now includes education services more than ever before, insofar as the 1989 Children Act gives primacy to the views, wishes, and feelings of individual pupils, investing them with legal rights, and enabling them to challenge teacher authority and school practice. This legislation requires teachers to be more aware of the children in their care, recognising their individual rights alongside their educational needs (Irving & Parker-Jenkins, 1995).

With the implementation of the Education Act (1988) which led to the introduction of the National Curriculum and other Government initiatives, schools have had to accommodate considerable change in the way that they operate. For example, the recent Department for Education and Employment Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs also invokes the need for teachers to take full account of pupils' comments. To comply with the Code, schools are required to make every effort to identify the views and wishes of their pupils. The reason given for this ruling is that young people are more likely to respond positively to intervention programmes if they

fully understand the rationale for their involvement, and if they are given some personal responsibility for their own progress (DFEE, 1994).

Another shift in the way that schools operate is implicit in the policy of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 1992). This mandates that teams of school inspectors must include the evaluation of pupil support programmes in their investigation of every school that they visit. In conducting this evaluation, Registered Inspectors are specifically directed to sample pupil opinion on the extent to which they benefit from the school's arrangements for guidance and support.

#### Arguments From Professional Experience

There may however be some discrepancy between the government's expectation that schools operate the relevant procedures, and professional opinion on the extent to which pupil guidance and support can actually be provided. According to Reid (1989) the grassroots reality is not only that the demise of school counsellors has deprived many schools of a specialist member of staff, but also that because the scope and range of childrens' problems is so great, teachers simply do not have the time to assist every pupil with conduct or emotional problems. Even if they had the time, he argues, the majority of secondary teachers are not properly trained to help, since most training courses offer no main methods course for working with exceptional children, and only a small proportion of teachers have completed relevant in-service courses.

Given the above circumstances, it may not be without significance that teachers frequently report to the writer that they are unable to spend the time that they would like to on pupil support activities. Yet in the course of his work, the author has observed that the need for personal support in secondary schools can be predicted for some individuals on the basis of their primary school history. Moreover, interpersonal difficulties may arise from the transition to secondary education, which is implemented at eleven or twelve years of age by most Local Education Authorities. This imposes a general change in the pattern of pupils' relationships with adults in school, which in itself may carry implications for pupil support.

One can note, for example, that during their primary education, children have to relate chiefly to one teacher. This same teacher has responsibility for tasks as diverse as establishing discipline, taking registration, curriculum delivery, and providing personal support. In contrast, within secondary schools, some of these responsibilities are delegated to different members of staff. In the secondary phase of their education, students may find that registration is conducted by one teacher, while curriculum delivery involves as many as a dozen others. In the absence of specialised counselling staff, school policies often delegate the tasks of pastoral care, personal and social development, and individual counselling to different teachers again. Serious problems, in the experience of the author, may be rapidly referred to a senior member of the teaching staff. In this situation, secondary students can find that the adult involved is someone whom they do not know well, and whose role may be compounded by involvement in the school's discipline system.

## **Rationale For Research On Adolescence And School-Based Helping**

As already mentioned, recognition of the need to support young people is included in the 1989 Children Act (HMSO,1989) as well as the DFE Code of Practice (DFEE, 1994) and OFSTED policy (OFSTED, 1992). Furthermore, the idea of providing support for children facing personal difficulty is already well developed in the counselling literature. Notably, Egan (1990) has developed a sophisticated model of practice for counsellors, which incorporates the notion of helping as its central conceptual pillar. In outlining an appropriate professional approach, Murgatroyd (1977) suggests that counselling is essentially a helping interaction, in which one person seeks to facilitate the development of self-knowledge and coping strategies in another. Lazare, Eisenthal, & Wasserman (1975) have suggested that it is the helper's task to enter into a process of negotiation, during which they expect the recipient to state their problem, and to give an indication of how they would like to be helped.

Because of recent legal and operational developments, there is a clear need to take account of the views of young people themselves in planning future provision. The importance of providing appropriate helping resources for children and young persons appears to be recognised by politicians, lawyers, administrators, teachers, counsellors and researchers. On a philosophical note, Bavidge (1995) remarks that although teachers are not social workers, they are adults who are very significant in the lives of the children they teach, to whom children look for normal human care and interest. Although Burningham (1994) suggests that young people will be less able than older people to draw on previous experience, both in terms of understanding their own feelings and in



coping with problems that may arise, Branwhite (1988) comments that as long as we omit to ask young people for their viewpoint, we risk implying that their ideas are held in low regard.

It is one thing to believe it desirable to help young people in need, but it may be quite another to have sound information upon which to shape the delivery of appropriate resources. As a result of telephone calls placed to the DFEE, the author has learned that pertinent data, for example on the effectiveness of secondary school counselling services, have not been collected systematically. Seemingly, at neither the individual school, Local Education Authority, or national levels of the education service has there been an effort to establish a comprehensive data-base. Therefore at present it remains unclear what proportion of adolescents is likely to seek adult help for their problems in school. In the absence of information on adolescent perceptions of school-based helping, identification of appropriate resources and procedures for helping students during the secondary level of their education therefore remains largely speculative.

### **Psychology And Adolescence**

A primary reason for studying adolescence is that it is a distinct stage of development during which accelerated, important, and unique changes take place in the biosocial status of the individual (Ausubel, Montemeyor, & Svajian, 1977). These writers also suggest that if adolescents as a group tend to feel, learn, think, or act in certain characteristic ways, or if they present common problems of adjustment because they are passing through the same developmental period, then it behoves all persons who have dealings with them to acquire some understanding of the psychology of adolescence.

While the earliest beginnings of adult interest in the development and well-being of young people are difficult to identify, the start of the scientific study of adolescence by psychologists can be determined with pin-point accuracy. In 1904, G Stanley Hall, President of Clark University, and founder of the American Psychological Association, published a two-volume work entitled "Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education". In the course of this monumental work, Hall characterised adolescence in sweeping terms:-

“Adolescence is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born. The qualities of body and soul that now emerge are far newer. The child comes from and harks back to a remoter past; the adolescent is neo-atavistic, and in him the later acquisitions of race slowly become prepotent. Development is less gradual and more saltatory, suggestive of some ancient period of storm and stress when old moorings were broken and a higher level attained.” (Hall 1904: xiii)

According to Conger And Petersen (1984) many subsequent writers have been influenced by Hall's recapitulation theory of development to view him as a one-sided exponent of a strictly biological, maturational concept of adolescence, which ignored the effects of culture. Yet such an interpretation, they suggest, is erroneous. In fact, Hall draws a clear distinction between the role of biological and environmental factors during adolescence, stating that:-

"Young children grow despite great hardships, but later adolescence is more dependent upon favouring conditions in the environment, disturbances of which more readily cause arrest and prevent maturity." (Hall 1904:47)

Hence it appears that Hall actually suggested an increase in the influence of environmental factors during adolescence. However, the long-term importance of Hall's contribution is probably to be found less in his recapitulation theory than it is in establishing adolescence as a distinctive field of psychological investigation. This single-handed achievement stimulated a great deal of subsequent professional interest, which today supports several journals devoted exclusively to the study of adolescence. Hence adolescent psychology has come of age as a largely natural (ecological) science rather than an experimental one, given that much of the material included is based upon observational data (Ansubel, Montemeyer & Svajian, 1977).

### **Models Of Adolescence**

Despite significant progress in the field, opinion regarding the interpretation of psychological research on adolescent development diverges, and therefore brief discussion of the two main models of adolescence appear to be warranted at this point in the introduction.

### Adolescence As Disturbed Development

A number of later researchers, perhaps influenced by Hall's use of the phrase "storm and stress," imply that adolescence is an acute phase of human development. For example, Copeland and Hess (1995) refer to adolescence as a crucial time in the development of the individual, and Fitzgerald, Joseph, Hayes, and O'Regan (1995) suggest that it is no less than a critical period for the formation of attitudes towards life. The use of terms like crucial or critical suggests that these writers construe the adolescent years as exercising particularly powerful effects upon the development of the individual. Some authors have offered rather paradoxical observations. Hutter (1938) for example remarks that adolescence is abnormal if everything passes normally, and Hyatt-Williams (1975) concludes that adolescence without normative crisis is not adolescence.

The above suggestions by no means exhaust the range of concerns which have been expressed about development during adolescence however. Reference to some form of conflict seems to occur in the work of many authorities. For instance, Friedenberg (1959) has actually characterised adolescence as a period of conflict, a protracted conflict between the individual and society. More recently, Herbert (1989) infers that adolescents are often rightly thought of as disciplinary headaches for their parents. Mussen, Conger and Kagan (1970) assert that some alarmed observers believe that young people have become more rebellious, more troubled emotionally, more promiscuous sexually, less idealistic, more critical of the values and standards of adult culture, and more disengaged from them.

Eastman and Rozen (1994) go so far as to assert that the teenage years can be shattering times. The most easy-going teenagers, they suggest, feel overwhelmed at times, and find that the balancing act of juggling feelings, responsibilities, and the needs of others can sometimes seem like just too much to cope with. This notion may not be entirely without foundation, since Rutter (1977) refers to the discovery that inner turmoil, as represented by feelings of misery, self deprecation, and ideas of being laughed at, are quite common amongst early adolescents.

More seriously, other writers have taken the position that adolescence actually represents some form of psychopathology. Notably, Freud (1953) asserts that the sexual impulses break through to produce the subordination of all sexual components-instincts under the primacy of the genital zone. From psychoanalytic theory, this predicts adolescent attempts to resolve earlier Oedipal conflicts, a goal which is achieved in part by transferring individual attachments to new relationships. Anna Freud (1950) gives the opinion that adolescent manifestations come close to symptom formation of neurotic, psychotic, or dissocial order, and merge almost imperceptibly into almost all of the mental illnesses. Kretschmer (1951) implies that adolescence is a period of human development which generates an increase in schizoid characteristics. From the same psychoanalytic tradition, Von Krevelin (1970) {cited in Herbert, 1994} suggests that adolescence is a period of life which by its disintegrative character may seem like a psychosis itself.

While these views have been widely disseminated however, Douvan and Adelson (1966) concluded from a large-scale study that the traditional psychoanalytic view was

based upon sensitive, articulate, middle-class adolescents. Since they may not represent the broad range of characteristics in the wider adolescent population, these authors argue that the validity of the conclusions drawn must therefore be limited.

### Adolescence As Normal Development

Working within a different research paradigm, it was the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1961) who posed the timely question of whether mental and emotional distress during adolescence is as inevitable as teething is a period of misery for the small baby. In answer to that question, there is now a sufficient number of published opinions to indicate acceptance of the alternate view, that adolescence should be regarded as a period of normal functioning. However, within this framework, Boldero and Fallon (1995) have concluded that adolescence is a period which involves change in several important dimensions, and Coleman (1989a) refers to adolescence as a developmental stage associated with a number of problems.

Taking a broad view, Hilgard and Atkinson (1967) describe the adolescent period as only a phase in the stream of growth. They also argue that it is a mistake to emphasise too sharply any discontinuities in comparison with other phases of human growth. In keeping with this opinion, a four-year follow up study of children living on the Isle of Wight (Graham & Rutter, 1973) suggested that psychiatric disorders were only slightly more common at fourteen and fifteen than they had been at ten and eleven. With comparable restraint, Nurmi, Poole and Kalakoski (1994) conceptualise adolescence as a transitional period of personality development, which can incorporate a

period of thinking about the future. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) also contend that emotional autonomy and self-reliance increase during the adolescent years. Likewise, Blos (1967) suggests that adolescence is a time of re-negotiating relationships with parents, a process which requires cognitive and interpersonal competence. After reviewing several normative studies of adolescent relationships, Lewis (1993) has also argued in favour of a developmentally evolving capacity for intimacy and relatedness.

Another carefully balanced opinion is provided by Conger and Petersen (1984). These writers note that while many adolescents feel occasional periods of uncertainty and self-doubt, of loneliness and sadness, or of anxiety and concern for the future, they are also likely to experience joy, excitement, curiosity, a sense of adventure, and a feeling of competence in mastering new challenges. Conger & Petersen also remark that although a high degree of emotional turmoil characterises some adolescents, there has been an unwarranted tendency on the part of some clinicians to generalise too readily to the average adolescent findings obtained from a limited segment of the population. Further qualification is provided by Fontana (1991). This author provides an interactionist perspective on the relationship between adolescence and challenging behaviour, in which he asserts that it is not physiological changes that create rebellious teenagers, but society itself, through its artificial methods of relating to young people. One form which this takes in a complex industrial society, he suggests, is that we keep the young in a subservient role (i.e. still attending school) long after they have reached physical maturity.

Whatever the quality of their experience, in the view of Havinghurst (1952) during early to mid adolescence, young people have a series of developmental tasks to

accomplish. Over forty years later, Nurmi, Pool and Kalakoski (1994) proposed a contemporary version of this earlier suggestion. The tasks specified include achieving mature relationships with peers, forming a sex-role identity, achieving emotional independence from parents, planning educational goals, preparing for an economic career, and orientating for marriage and adult family life. The development of such ideas reflects professional assumptions that adolescent change should usually be perceived as normal human development.

While Mussen, Conger, & Kagan (1970) suggest there is general agreement that the adolescent period presents special adjustment problems, none of the above authors imply that a causal relationship exists between adolescence and pathological functioning. Significantly, non-clinic studies of adolescents (see for example Grinker and Werble, 1974; and Offer and Offer, 1974) found that most adolescents were reasonably well adjusted. This seems to be a recurrent finding, since Offer & Schonert-Reichl (1992) indicate that the majority of recent research suggests adolescence should not be represented as a time of severe emotional upheaval and turmoil. Indeed, they suggest that the majority of young people (80%) manage the adolescent transition quite well. Nevertheless, these authors also point out that a sizeable proportion of adolescents (20%) do not fare so well, with many not receiving the help they may need. Hence an all-or-none interpretation of adolescence as a time of difficulty appears inappropriate. Nonetheless, there is little support for the notion that pathological levels of disturbance dominate the adolescent years.



## Defining Adolescence

The term adolescence is derived from the Latin verb “adolescere,” meaning “to grow to maturity,” (Neilson, 1987). In keeping with that view, Hastin-Bennett (1993) defines adolescence as the period between puberty and the end of bodily growth. The same writer asserts that rapid physiological change may produce difficulties in psychological development, leading to turbulent behaviour. It is further suggested that adolescence may produce particular difficulty for parents, who may have to call on all their reserves of tolerance and understanding. Although this definition links physiological and psychological change, it remains in some respects unsatisfactory, because it goes beyond the central task of defining adolescence.

An alternative approach may be to determine the limits of adolescence by ruling out the preceding and following stages of development. In the view of Herbert (1994) for example, the notions of childhood and adulthood are clear enough, in that children are wholly dependent upon their parents for love, nurturance and guidance, while adults are required to be independent and able to care for themselves. Perhaps adolescence might then be taken as the period intervening between childhood and adulthood, and in fact this is the definition favoured by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary. With a little more precision, the Hamlyn World Dictionary defines adolescence as the transition period between puberty and adult stages of development. Burningham (1994) advances a definition which is compatible with this standpoint, by suggesting that adolescence is a transitional period occurring between the dependency of childhood and the responsibilities of adult life.

Herbert (1994) argues that the term adolescence refers particularly to psychological developments, which are broadly related the physical growth processes indicated by the term "puberty". This view is reinforced by Reber (1985) who marks the beginning of adolescence by the onset of puberty, but who identifies its end with the attainment of both physiological and psychological maturity. Yet, insofar as those psychological changes leading to maturity may not be completed within the adolescent period, that definition likewise has some constraints. Although the onset of puberty marks the beginning of the adolescent period, it seems likely to be cultural and socio-economic considerations rather than biological factors that mark its ending (Muus, 1975). Reber also notes that the term adolescence lacks precision, arguing that both the onset of puberty and the attainment of maturity are impossible to specify.

Perhaps it is such shortcomings which have lead to the adoption of alternative approaches to the definition of adolescence. For example, Petersen (1988) observes that schools emphasise the importance of chronological age, virtually regardless of developmental status. Therefore Petersen places emphasis upon the second decade of life as defining the adolescent period. However, those at the end of their second decade may not necessarily wish to identify with the adolescent label. Accordingly, other options may be more appropriate, and one further possibility is to take the law into account. In English law the age of majority is attained at eighteen years of age, and therefore a pragmatic alternative is to view adolescence as a period of development extending from puberty to the age of eighteen. One advantage of this orientation is that it eliminates much of the difficulty implicit in dealing with different thresholds for physical and psychological maturity. Accordingly, it will provide the definition of adolescence

adopted within this thesis, although some of the studies reviewed include those dealing with young people of up to 20 years of age.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

"There are two reasons for carefully reporting the literature-search process... First, it helps the reader to judge the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sources that are the subject of the review. Second, briefly detailing the literature-search process in a review...allows future reviewers of the topic to easily extend the review without duplicating it." (Jackson, 1980: 457).

### **Procedural Model For The Review.**

Advice on appropriate goals for an integrative literature review is available from several sources. Taveggia (1974) like Cooper (1989) suggests that these goals should include summarising an accumulated state of knowledge, and highlighting important issues that the research has left unsolved. This guidance reflects that given by Jackson (1980) who adds that a good review should explore the reasons for any differences in the results. Cooper (1982) suggests that the inferences made in integrative research reviews are as central to the validity of knowledge in behavioural science as those made in primary research. Therefore he counsels that reviewers should pay attention to rigorous methodology.

Inspection of available scientific guidelines for carrying out literature reviews provides a variety of options for the potential reviewer to follow. However, the outline provided by Jackson (1980) is particularly clear and concise, and accordingly, is adopted as the model for the present review. Jackson proposes that six key tasks should be incorporated into an integrative review of the literature. These are the selection of questions or hypotheses, sampling the literature, representing characteristics of the primary studies, analysing the primary studies, and interpreting the results. Implementation of Jackson's six tasks in the present context will next be described, following the above sequence.

### Task 1 : Selecting the research questions

Jackson notes that there are four important sources that ought to be consulted when developing questions, searching for tentative answers, or formulating hypotheses for a review. These include available theory, previous research studies, prior reviews, and the investigator's intuition, insight, or ingenuity. For this thesis, the predominant question is that of how secondary school students with personal problems view available helping resources. This question arose firstly from knowledge of the literature indicating that much of it was devoted to the opinion of theoreticians and researchers. Secondly, it was stimulated by the author's professional experience of working with young people and their families. Thirdly, it was facilitated by the author's own previous research on the opinions of secondary school students.

### Task 2 : Sampling the literature.

Jackson recommends that the sources of information sampled for a review should include primary studies, indexes, and bibliographies. The best protection against gathering an unrepresentative set of material, he indicates, is to locate as many existing studies as possible.

For the purposes of this review, a comprehensive search of the education and mental health literature was carried out, embracing three main lines of enquiry. The first of these included on-line searches via Bids, Dissertation Abstracts International, Eric, and Psyclit systems. In the course of this search, the terms counselling and helping were

cross-linked with multiple descriptors, including adolescent, anxiety, client, children, recall, opinion, outcome, relationship, effectiveness, evaluation, expectation, help-seeking, perception, preferences, reluctance, satisfaction, self-esteem, and termination. The second line of enquiry involved a supplementary manual search of published abstracts, including the Education Index, Psychological Abstracts, the Science Citation Index and the Social Science Citation Index. The third line embraced a 10-year back search of pertinent counselling and allied journals.

### Task 3 : Representing characteristics of the primary studies.

This task has been characterised by Jackson as the data-collection of integrated reviews, and therefore he regards it as desirable for reviewers to make and report extensive efforts to minimise missing data. In this instance, to conduct a thorough review, the decision made was to include studies of relevant student attributes and perceptions, also studies which had obtained the views of adolescents on school-based helping interventions. In addition, the lines of enquiry described under Task 1 above were augmented through the years 1992-1995 by written communication to 109 researchers distributed across four continents, yielding 63 replies, a return-rate of 58%. This compares favourably with responses to postal requests inviting recipients to participate in research projects. For example, Forehand, Neighbours & Weirson (1991) recorded a return-rate of 45% from a cohort of families whom they mailed for this purpose.

This review presents a comprehensive discussion of the research literature relating to adolescent problems, seeking support from others, and views of the help

received. Throughout the review, the main emphasis is placed upon studies of adolescent perception carried out in real-world settings. After reading the related literature, it was deemed appropriate to organise discussion of this material into six sections. The first of these involves mental health studies of adolescent problems. The second section covers educational investigations of adolescent problems. The third section includes research on adolescent support-seeking, and the fourth section embraces adolescent views of the help which they received. The fifth section presents a discussion of methodological limitations in the research literature, and the chapter concludes with a sixth section outlining directions for the present research.

#### Task 4 : Analysing the primary studies.

In Jackson's view, it follows that the analysis includes judgements about the implications of identified methodological strengths and weaknesses, and assessments of how characteristics of subjects, treatments, or causal variables may affect the reported findings. In the current review, pertinent details are referred to as appropriate in a summary of the research limitations. Within this summary, the sequence of discussion proceeds through the distribution of studies, the age distribution of the samples, the sample sizes, the research techniques, the data analysis procedures, and the broader sampling and procedural issues involved.



### Task 5 : Interpreting the results.

In dealing with this task, Jackson suggests that the reviewer ought to report ideas about improved methods and additional questions that need to be answered. He also argues that there is a place for the consideration of theory, policy or practice. It is proposed to address these summative issues towards the end of the literature review.

### Task 6 : Reporting the review.

Jackson remarks how it is widely held that the report ought to describe the sampling, measurement, analysis and findings. Accordingly, these details are incorporated into the review which follows as they become salient.

### Terminology and Presentation

Recourse to the literature reveals that there is substantial variation in the way that researchers employ particular terms, but considerable overlap in the working interactions described between different professionals and their clients. Consequently, to enhance readability in the course of this review, the terms counsellor, helper, and therapist will be regarded as having parallel meaning, as will their derivatives counselling, helping, and therapy. Moreover, the titles teacher, counsellor, psychologist and psychiatrist will be subsumed under the use of the term professional where they are

not individually referred to. The text is presented in accordance with the specification given in the current American Psychological Association Manual of Publications (APA, 1994) and is set up as a Microsoft Word document, using a Times New Roman 12-point font.

## **Review of The Related Literature**

### Part One: Mental Health Research on Adolescent Problems

#### Introduction

Social and emotional difficulties during adolescence can be predicted, on the grounds that adolescents may have outgrown childhood dependence, but may not have gained the self-reliance and independence of adulthood. Adolescents enter a phase of human development where they can parallel the activities of adults in some respects, e.g. in a cognitive capacity for abstract thinking, and in a biological capacity for reproduction - but not in others, such as economic self-sufficiency, or breadth of life-experience. Indeed, a qualitative difference between adolescent and adult life is suggested by early longitudinal research. The Berkeley Growth Study, the Berkeley Guidance Study, and the work of the Fels Institute have suggested that adult behaviour corresponds more closely with the behaviour of the individual during childhood than with their functioning during adolescence (Clarke-Stewart & Koch, 1983 p.389). Such differences in the characteristics of adolescents and adults help to justify the study of adolescent experience in its own right.

## Self-Report Studies

Contemporary researchers have begun to investigate patterns of adolescent concern directly. In contrast to the longitudinal research referred to above, most self-report studies included in this review have been completed in the last 10 years, suggesting that interest in studying adolescent opinion is a relatively new phenomenon. One of the most widespread investigations has been carried out by Yamamoto, Soliman, Parsons, & Davies (1987), who surveyed 1814 young people aged 8-14 years in six different countries. These included Australia, Canada, Egypt, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States. Despite some cultural variations, approximately 80% of the respondents reported their top four negative experiences as including (in descending order of importance) disturbing dreams, visits to the dentist, being accused of lying, and losing in a game. Around 70% mentioned having to talk in front of their class and failing to get 100% in a test as the next items, followed by 60% mentioning parental conflict, and approximately 50% cited getting lost, or receiving a poor school report. The tenth-ranking experience, cited by almost half of the sample (49%) referred to being ridiculed in class.

Yamamoto et al provided further relevant data, by asking their sample to rate a broader range of life events, in terms of how upsetting they might be. Regardless of cultural differences, the top five median values included the loss of a parent, going blind, having to repeat a year in school, wetting oneself in class, and parental conflict. It seems reasonable to infer that a proportion of young people may be subject to significant concerns and anxieties. However, there was no British representation in this student sample, so that the implications for adolescents in the U.K. are unclear.

The findings of the above international study have been extended in a European context by an longitudinal survey of 356 young adolescents living in Mannheim, Germany (Esser, Schmidt & Woerner, 1990). Although these workers focused their attention upon a very similar age-range to that of Yamamoto et al (i.e. 8-13 years, compared to 8-14 years in the international study) they employed a different methodology, by seeking to determine the reported prevalence of specific symptoms in percentage terms. Perhaps predictably, this technique generated differing findings.

The most common symptom, headaches, was found in just over 40% of the Mannheim sample, and approximately 30% reported nail-biting, abdominal pain, depressed mood, or peer-related problems. A little over 20% indicated experiencing symptoms which included eating difficulties, school-based conduct problems, alcohol abuse, or the presence of phobias. More importantly however, Esser et al concluded that prevalence rates for psychiatric disorders occurred in the range of 16-18 %, adding that between 25% & 33% of the sample showed disturbances which required some kind of professional intervention.

Another European investigation, that of Larsson (1991) examined somatic symptoms in a Swedish sample of 539 secondary students of 13-18 years old. In this study, headaches were reported by 66% of the respondents, abdominal pain by 36%, and nausea by 40%. However, a far more striking characteristic was that 80% of the students indicated that they experienced tiredness, leading the author to comment that this should be regarded as a normal symptom for adolescents.

In an American study considering adolescent health concerns, Dubow, Lovko, & Kausch (1990) surveyed 1,384 twelve to eighteen year-old teenagers living in semi-rural Ohio. This time 92% reported headaches. Moreover, nail-biting was noted by 57%, stomach-aches by 75%, depression by 62%, but peer-related problems were not reported on. However, other commonly nominated problems included moodiness (77%); anxiety (73%); aggression or anger (71%); parents (70%); depression (62%); school failure (42%); feeling overweight (46%); loss of appetite (41%); and experiencing suicidal thoughts (36%). Although some of the same items were covered as in the two European studies, the frequency of responding appears substantially higher in this American sample, which includes older adolescents. However, it is not clear whether the reported differences arise from cultural or age effects, some combination of the two, or a greater readiness to report personal experiences on the part of American teenagers.

Probably the largest self-report study yet completed is that of Blum, McKay, Resnick, Geer & Campbell (1992) who surveyed 36,000 adolescents of 12-18 years for the Minnesota Adolescent Health Program. In this survey, the most frequently reported student concerns included their looks (53%); a parent dying (40%); losing their best friend (40%); their popularity (40%); and their friendships (32%). For a sub-set of 17,544 rural respondents, emotional problems were recorded by 18% of the students (Walker, Harris, Blum, Schneider & Resnick, 1990). This was in comparison to a level of 22% reported for a group of 12,915 urban students from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area by Rhode & Bellfield (1992).

The range of adolescent problems suggested by the above investigations is clearly a wide one, however these findings by no means represent an exhaustive list. Further items of relevance for the adolescent population are added by Stark, Spirito, Williams & Guevremont (1989). These authors asked 704 adolescents from Providence, Rhode Island, to identify problems that they had encountered in the previous month. Their results showed that these inner city and suburban teenagers most commonly reported problems with their school (20%); their parents (17%); boyfriends or girlfriends (14%); and with their friends (13%). A very low frequency of concern was registered for employment or (4%); death (4%); or the future (3%).

McGee & Stanton (1992) worked with a sample of 945 fifteen-year-olds in Dunedin, New Zealand. In the context of being asked to indicate frequency and distress ratings for 20 commonly occurring events, this sample produced a contrasting set of concerns. Moreover, the prevalence levels differed markedly from the foregoing studies, in that no particular event was cited by more than 11% of the sample. Also, most of the top 10 items were annotated by less than 10% of the respondents. Amongst the top five items, two were to do with feelings (either feeling sick or feeling left out), two were parent-related issues (parents arguing or separating) and the other concern was to do with changing schools. Of the remaining five events, three were related to feeling pressured, (to get good marks, to comply with house-rules, or to try something new) and two suggested feelings of inadequacy, (not being good enough at sports, and not having enough money). An interesting aspect of this study is that significant product-moment correlations were found for most of the associations between events and personal stress ratings.

Another recently completed investigation, carried out by Spirito, Stark Grace, & Stamoulis (1991) surveyed 676 American students of nine to fourteen years old, using the Kidcope Rating Scale (Spirito et al, 1988). Students were asked to indicate problems which they had experienced during the previous month. The four most common sources of stress for the whole sample were reported as including parents, siblings, school, & friends. Inspection of the relevant data, (Table1; P.536) reveals that these items were not reported with equal frequency in children and adolescents however. For thirteen and fourteen year-olds, the four most commonly reported problem sources were parents (21%); miscellaneous (15%); siblings (12%); and friends (11%) respectively. Moreover, by combining individual items, it appears that family-based problems (parent-to-parent conflict, parent-to-child conflict, siblings, and family health) were reported by 38% of the sample, in contrast to 17% for peer-problems, and just 9% for school-based problems. Hence family-related problems appear to predominate in this particular adolescent sample.

A contrasting set of adolescent concerns, in which family problems did not predominate, has been identified by Gillies (1989). This author reported on a longitudinal survey carried out between 1984 & 1987 with 547 eleven and fourteen year-olds in the city of Nottingham. In describing anxieties about their future lives, 63% of this sample indicated that employment was their primary concern, while 34% ranked death as a prevalent worry (24% their own death, and 10% the death of their parents). Health-related concerns were a major consideration for 33% of the sample. On a contemporary note, about one-fifth (21%) revealed that they were concerned about AIDS, while a further 10% reported that they worried about experiencing poor health. About a quarter



of these young people (24%) were preoccupied with money worries, and 13% had concerns about how well they would do in examinations. An important aspect of this study is the extent to which the top five items suggest that concerns regarding the maintenance and survival of the self featured in student thinking.

One further study which deserves attention in contemporary mental health research is that of Kurdek (1987) who conducted a survey of 298 American students in the 12-14 year age-group. Although percentage data were not provided in this study, in recording the top ten most frequently reported items, Kurdek noted that six of these were common to both girls and boys. These six problems incorporated feelings of being the focus of other people's attention, being uneasy when the subject of discussion by others, having recurrent negative thoughts, finding it difficult to concentrate, being easily annoyed, and experiencing muscular soreness. A positive feature of this study is the indication that adolescents can appear sensitive to evaluation by others.

Against the background of the studies outlined above, it is evident that adolescents report a wide range of personal problems. Yet while we need to know about their perceptions, we also need to know whether evidence of adolescent problems necessarily implies the presence of some psychological dysfunction. For this purpose, it can be instructive to refer to data on the prevalence of clinically significant problems, which include attributes such as anxiety disorder, conduct disorder, depression, emotional disorder, hyperactivity, or somatisation disorder.

## Prevalence Studies on Psychological Disorders

Studies reporting on the prevalence of psychological disorders appear to be based upon three main factors. These include firstly the benchmarks established by authoritative sources such as the International Classification of Diseases (ICD 10; WHO,1995) or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM IV; APA,1995). Secondly, they involve interviewing and observation of the individual concerned in light of information from other sources. Thirdly, they require clinical experience and judgement on the part of the professionals involved.

Where conduct disorders have been included, prevalence estimates for psychological disorder in adolescents have been given as 16% for 12-13 year olds and 14% for 14-15 year olds in Japan (Morita, Suzuki, Suzuki, & Kamoshita (1993). The 16% level has been supported by Esser, Schmidt, & Woerner's (1990) Mannheim study. Although the Institute of Medicine (1989) has estimated that only 12% of American children and adolescents suffer from serious emotional and behavioural problems, Tuma (1989) reflected data from the foregoing studies by estimating that 15-19% of American children and youth may be in need of mental health treatment.

At the upper end of this range, Whitaker, Johnson, Shaffer, Rapoport, Kalikan, Walsh, Davies, Braiman, & Dolinsky (1990) estimated an 18% prevalence of DSM III disorders in 5,108 unreferral New Jersey adolescents. A six-month prevalence level of 18% has also been identified by Offord, Boyle, Szatmari, Rae-Grant, Links, Cadman, Byles, Crawford, Blum, Byrne, Thomas, & Woodward (1987) in the Ontario Child Health Study. Again, that research team used DSM III criteria, although this time in a

general population sample of 1,869 families with children of 4-16 years old. These higher prevalence figures are buttressed by the investigation of Kashani, Beck, Hooper, Fallahi, Corcoran, McAllister, Rosenberg, & Reid (1987). These authors investigated the prevalence of DSM III disorders amongst 150 high school students in Columbus, Missouri, and concluded that psychological disorders were present in virtually 19% of the sample.

This is still not the highest estimate to be found in the literature however. In the U.K. Graham & Rutter (1973) suggest a figure as high as 21% for fourteen to fifteen year-olds, when data from multiple sources are taken into account. This level of incidence is supported by Hill (1993). Golombek, Marton, Stein & Korenblum (1987) have asserted that cross-sectional prevalence rates of personality dysfunction vary with the sub-phases of adolescence, being higher for early and late adolescents. However, when the data are examined longitudinally, these authors suggest that 25% of teenagers are disturbed throughout adolescence, while 40% fluctuate into or out of disturbance at one sub-phase or another. This may help to explain why Rutter, Cox, Tupling, Berger & Yule (1975) had found, among 504 fourteen to fifteen year-olds, that self-deprecation, misery, and depression or suicidal ideation were common, and why Chartier & Lessen (1994) found, in a sample of 792 high school students, that 41% reported experiencing suicidal ideation.

## Gender Differences

Further variation in adolescent problems has been reported by Forehand, Neighbours & Weirson (1991) in a study of 259 children aged 10-16 years, who came from recently divorced families in the American state of Georgia. These workers found that the earlier childhood pattern, in which boys presented a higher frequency of problems than girls, was one that became reversed in the teenage years. By mid adolescence, girls in this sample exhibited a significantly higher frequency of emotional difficulties than boys. From an investigation of anxiety, mood, and obsessive-compulsive cognition, the Offord et al study noted earlier had likewise concluded that teenage girls showed a higher incidence of emotional disorder. Similarly, Rhode & Bellfield (1992) found that high emotional stress was reported by 16% of male adolescents compared with 29% of females.

The hypothesis of differences existing between the sexes has been reinforced in a very recent study completed by Caspar, Belanoff & Offer (1996) which reported on gender differences amongst 497 sixteen-to-eighteen year-old Chicago high-school students. Amongst this sample, females reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress when compared to males, notably in the form of depressed mood and anxiety,. From a different standpoint, Larsson (1991) reported, in a Swedish survey of 539 adolescents of 13-18 years, that a predominance of somatic complaints is consistently found in females throughout adolescence. However, issues as yet unresolved in interpreting this research include questions of whether females actually experience more somatic symptoms, simply talk more about those that do occur, or whether they experience more symptoms and communicate more about them.

Some studies have suggested that adolescent reaction to the occurrence of personal problems varies between the sexes. For example, Stark et al (1989) in a study of 704 adolescents aged 14-17 years, reported that sex-differences exerted a more powerful effect than age differences. They noted that while the prevalence of school-based problems was ranked highest by males, it was ranked lowest by females.

From an investigation of adolescent coping amongst 602 students of 12-13 years old Ryan, Stiller & Lynch (1994) concluded that males were less likely than females to discuss educational or emotional concerns with friends. Evidence in favour of this view has also been provided by Patterson & McCubbin (1987) who recorded that female students more frequently employed an interpersonal coping style in handling their problems. Bird & Harris (1990) similarly highlighted female recourse to social support when solving personal problems.

Other sex-based differences in handling problems include a finding by Copeland & Hess (1995) that female adolescents reported an increased use of catharsis in their problem reactions. On another dimension, Phelps & Jarvis (1994) determined from their mixed-sex sample of 484 adolescents of 14-17 years that males indicated using more avoidant coping responses than females. Similarly, Copeland & Hess (op.cit.) also observed that avoidant reactions were more common among the male students in their study of 244 teenagers aged 13-16 years.

Distinctive male problem-reactions have been further specified in two other recent studies. For example, Patterson & McCubbin (1987) in an investigation of 709

children in the range 11-18 years of age, noted that males relied more upon being humorous in dealing with their problems. Differential levels of emotional tension in the face of personal problems were also observed by Bird & Harris (1990) in a sample of 203 young adolescents of 11-13 years. These investigators found that males more often reported using anger when problems occurred.

### Conclusion

The foregoing research strongly suggests that adolescents exhibit a variety of personal problems and reactions to them. Apparently, this inference stands whether the methodology is based upon adolescent self-reports or differential diagnosis by mental health professionals in general population samples. However, these two research paradigms both suggest that although the range and severity of adolescent problems varies considerably, the majority of teenagers are not dysfunctional in a clinical sense, despite occasional episodes of personal distress. Moreover, Larson & Lampman-Petratis (1989) found that although mildly negative mood states were reported more frequently for older adolescents, hour-to-hour monitoring in 9-15 year-olds did not support the hypothesis that adolescence was associated with increased emotionality. Studies like these are important because of their capacity to provide evidence of relative stability during the adolescent years.

## **Part Two: Educational Research on Adolescent Problems**

### Introduction

Educational researchers have also addressed the question of what difficulties adolescents might report through the expedient of asking teenagers to indicate their own opinions. The fifteen self-report studies reviewed show that it has been a fruitful line of enquiry. Related fieldwork has been undertaken in widely dispersed geographical locations, and eleven relevant studies were found from the most recent decade of educational research. In keeping with the mental health research previously discussed, this suggests a considerable increase in the rate of output for educational research into adolescent problems.

### Studies Highlighting School-Based Problems

An early investigation was carried out by Abel & Gingles (1965). These authors administered the Mooney Problem Checklist (MPC; Mooney & Gorden, 1950) to 2,500 female high-school students in Nebraska. Results were reported for 200 individuals aged 14-16years. These students were requested to check the "troublesome", and "very troublesome" items of the MPC. The most frequently checked items, in order of magnitude, were adjustment to school work, personal and social relationships, recreational activities, finance, living conditions and employment; and courtship, sex and marriage. These were followed by health, the future, morals and religion, curriculum and

teaching issues, and finally, home and the family. However school-based problems were recorded by 27% of the sample, which was the highest individual category of responses.

Another study in which school problems received prominence was that of Vandeweile (1979). This author worked with a sample of 778 students attending secondary schools in Senegal. The results of this survey were that the hierarchy of student responses incorporated school problems (46%); political and social problems (14%); lack of self-confidence (12%); financial problems (11%); and career problems (9%). Family problems received a minimal number of responses, accounting for only 4% of the sample, so that school problems were again the most common category of concern.

Armacost (1989) factor-analysed questionnaire responses from 1301 fourteen to seventeen year-old Wisconsin high-school students, deriving four dimensions of adolescent distress. These were labelled as interpersonal aggression, goal conflict and support, social conflict and support, and perceived environmental mastery, the latter being an academically loaded factor. However, about two thirds of the students found the performance placement system adopted by the school to be a significant source of stress, (independent of socio-economic status, gender, or racial variables) while a comparable number indicated that they were fearful of theft of their belongings. Over a half of the sample added that racial tensions were a problem, and 43% indicated that having a part-time job and keeping up with school-work was stressful.

Violato & Holden (1988) carried out a survey of 439 Canadian high-school students aged 12-19 years. These authors found, (contrary to their expectation, based on



the work of ego theorists such as Erickson (1950) that identity formation is the central problem of adolescence) that educational concerns appeared to be uppermost in the minds of their respondents. The top ten responses, in terms of the seriousness attributed to each item (from Table 1; P.106) gave the highest priority to grades received in school, followed by concerns about career, personal appearance, future education, personal identity, employment, activities, family, friends and parents.

Violato & Holden went on to propose a four-factor model of adolescent problems which appears to offer a relatively straightforward means of conceptualising this field of enquiry. The four dimensions, derived from a factor analysis, were those of schooling and career; social self; personal or private self; and then health and appearance. Unfortunately for attempts to validate this proposal, the factor-analytic study of Porteous & Fisher, (1980) had previously proposed four differing factors. (These were parent-interaction; employment and future life; personal, physical and social inadequacies; and finally, conflict with authority & adult criticism.) In addition, the more recent mental health study of McGee & Stanton (1992) which also put forward a four-factor solution, did not generate the same four factors, let alone the same factors in a modified hierarchy. This latter study had nominated the factors of self-esteem, competence, parental conflict, and moving. The divergence between these findings, from studies including 15 year-old subjects where data was factor-analysed, may say as much about differences in the constructs applied by the teams of researchers as they do about any proposed differences between the research samples.

### Studies Highlighting Career Problems

Career concerns were the focus of a study conducted by Cherry and Gear (1987) who explored the career concerns of 1712 thirteen to fifteen year-olds in 20 English comprehensive schools. In this investigation, considerable anxiety about finding work was identified, which was independent of membership of any particular year group. Significantly, employment also featured in the top three items for Porteous & Kelleher's (1987) sample, while in the Gillies (1989) mental health study, approximately 50% of the sample expressed concern regarding employment, compared with 40% who identified future jobs as the most frequent concern in the Gallagher et al investigation.

Gallagher, Millar, Hargie, & Ellis (1992) asked 446 fifteen to eighteen year olds attending schools or colleges in the west of Northern Ireland to rate their personal and social worries. The mean ratings from the whole sample were then ranked in order of the frequency of students' concerns. These were identified as finding a job, myself, choosing a job, the opposite sex, myself and others, starting work, home and finally school. The attention given to career issues here may reflect the problems of widespread unemployment in Northern Ireland. Intriguingly, students at single-sex schools tended to worry more about finding a job than did their peers at co-educational schools. An important aspect of this study is that it highlights how much research findings remain open to influence from conditions existing in the location where the research is carried out.

Using a slightly different research technique, Nurmi, Poole and Kalakoski (1994) asked 341 Australian and 142 Finnish secondary students to describe their hopes and fears for the future. The most frequently mentioned hopes were future occupation (77%); education (65%); family and marriage (58%); leisure activities (42%); and property-related (39%). The two most frequently mentioned concerns were also occupation (38%) and education (34%). However, health concerns formed the next most important category (28%); followed by global issues (24%); with family and marriage referred to by (20%) of the sample. Age, gender and cultural variable also influenced the results significantly.

Hutchinson & Reagan (1989) attempted to find out just what problems 1,734 high-school seniors would seek counsellor assistance for, drawing their respondents from 10 randomly selected Indiana senior-high schools. These workers determined that their sample was most likely to identify the twin concerns of their education or their career as material for discussion with counsellors. These items accounted for the top 10 survey responses, cited by between 61% and 90% of the student body involved. Both boys and girls reflected virtually identical opinions regarding the appropriateness of academic or career concerns for counsellor contact.

The occurrence of anxieties about social status along with academic concerns was attested to by Friedman (1991). Working with 1,645 Israeli students, Friedman asked this sample to list three problems with which they had been pre-occupied. Significantly, 41% of the young people taking part in this survey indicated that they had educational or career concerns, which was the highest response-category reported. A total of 2,987 problems were recorded, (1,948 for 15-year olds, and 1,039 for students

of 17 years) with averages of 1.93 and 1.64 problems respectively for each age group. Hence an important aspect of this study is that it provides evidence suggesting that the average number of problems experienced does not necessarily increase during the adolescent years.

### Studies Highlighting Family Problems

A study by Collins and Harper (1974) investigated the problems of 514 secondary students in the Sydney metropolitan area. These authors noted that the wording of American surveys was unsuitable for Australian adolescents, and used an open-ended questionnaire of their own design, which required anonymous essay-type answers. The resulting responses were classified into six problem areas, of which family problems represented by far the largest group. In descending order by rank, these areas were family-related (33% of the sample); socially-related (27%); self-related (18%); health-related (9%); and philosophy-of-life-related (5%). Hence social concerns again seemed more frequent. Taken overall, the collated responses showed that these Australian students averaged just over three problems each.

The second study to feature concern about the family was carried out in the north of England. Porteous and Fisher (1980) in one of the few interview studies conducted by educational researchers, worked with 124 secondary school students of 15-16 years old. An analysis of their responses yielded four factors of significance in adolescent problem perception. These were parent-interaction; employment and future

life; personal and social inadequacies; and finally, conflict with authority and adult criticism.

Developing this earlier investigation, Porteous (1985) administered his own checklist to 2,897 adolescents aged 12-16 years, divided between England and the Irish Republic. Pointing out that professionals cannot rely on their own experience of adolescence as a reliable guide to normality in that phase of development, Porteous noted that in general the frequency of adolescent problems with parents and peers declined significantly with age, but employment worries increased, as did symptomatic concerns. The variables of culture and sex were both influential in modifying the overall results however, and the prevalence of most problems tended to peak at the age of fourteen.

In a later Irish study, Porteous & Kelleher (1987) surveyed 394 students from fifteen secondary schools in the Irish Republic. An equal number of Catholic, Community, and Vocational schools were involved. The most frequently referred-to problems by rank included parents, authority, employment, self-concern, and boy-girl relationships, followed by self-image, peers, delinquency, and oppression. This pattern of findings bears similarities to the main variables of the earlier Porteous & Fisher (1980) study, although they occur in a different order.

Finally, Boldero and Fallon (1995) sought ratings of personal problems from 1,013 adolescents aged 11-18, who were attending secondary schools in the metropolitan Melbourne area. The problems selected were those which had caused them considerable distress during the previous six months. In order of priority, 26% reported

a problem with their family; 20% an interpersonal problem; 18% a health problem; but only 17% reported educational problems.

### Studies Highlighting Problems of The Self

The earliest of these was seemingly completed in the Indian sub-continent. Chaudhari (1976) surveyed 930 students attending government secondary schools of Indore city, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The survey was formulated in Hindi, and covered the problems and life-interests of adolescent students. Students were asked to rank the items as personal problems in the light of their own experience. The results indicated that the most frequently cited problems for both sexes included money, recreation, study habits and health. Percentage levels were not reported for students taking part in the study. However, several other studies have reported adolescent concerns relating to the self.

A more recent example is provided by Brown, O'Keeffe, Sanders & Baker (1986) who reported a study of 487 children aged 8-18 years attending schools in Salt Lake City. For the adolescent participants, the most frequently reported personal stresses were fear of negative evaluation (39%) and conflict with or rejection by a friend (19%). However, while 12-15 year olds reported that conflict with an adult was a personal stressor (9%), the comparable item for 16-18 year olds was concern regarding the future (10%).

Further evidence regarding the diversity of adolescent problems has been provided by Branwhite (1994). In this instance, a sample of 836 students, in their first

year of secondary education, anonymously completed a 14-item forced-choice questionnaire to provide information on the range of life-events experienced. Almost 65% reported experiencing bereavement, 55% had moved house, and 30% had seen someone being badly injured. Virtually 26% of the respondents indicated that their parents had separated, or that they had themselves been in an accident (24%); had been attacked by an animal (26%); or had personal property stolen (24%). Reports of physical abuse from peers were received from 19% of the students, while the reported incidence of verbal abuse rose to 43%. (This finding reiterates adolescent concerns about bullying reported by Smith, 1992, and Keys & Fernandes, 1993.)

#### Studies Highlighting Problems of Social Interaction

No studies could be found in the course of this review in which problems of social interaction outside of a family setting were endorsed more frequently than other adolescent concerns. However, some studies were identified which suggest that social interaction causes some concern in the teenage years. For example, in Armacost's (1989) Wisconsin study, a total of 25% of the sample felt that cliques prevented them from doing some of the things they would like to do, and 20% felt that it was hard or impossible to get into school-based activity sessions.

From Abel & Gingles (op. cit.) female sample, as many as 43% indicated that they wanted to be more popular, and 73% that they had too few dates, while 28% that they were not being attractive enough to the opposite sex. Collins & Harper (1974) reported that 27% of their sample had problems in relating to others, while Brown et al

(1986) recorded that 19% of the students whom they worked with were also concerned about social interaction. Branwhite (1994) reported that 43% of a comprehensive school sample had experienced verbal abuse from other students, and Boldero & Fallon (1995) found that 20% of the adolescents responding in their study stated that they had interpersonal problems.

### The Influence of Age, Gender, and Culture Variables

#### The Influence Of Age

Research outcomes are further differentiated by the effects of chronological age. Younger adolescents have been found to be more frequently concerned about educational issues, while older adolescents have been shown to worry more about their futures (Friedman, 1991). The direction of this age differentiation does not appear to be consistent however, since Violato & Holden (op.cit) found that younger adolescents were more concerned about smoking and drug abuse, whereas their older counterparts showed greater concern over educational and career issues. This reversal suggests that perhaps the effects of culture may act as a powerful mediating variable, the more so since Gillie's (1989) Nottingham study reported that unemployment was followed by death, and then health, as the issues of major importance at the age of fourteen.

In keeping with this viewpoint, Porteous, (1985) has suggested that adolescent problem incidence may peak at around 14 years of age. However, he qualified this



proposal by noting that personal concerns about self-confidence and employment often increase with age. Nonetheless, Gallagher et al (1992) observed that in general, the overall frequency of adolescent worries seems to decrease as chronological age increases. While Brown et al (1986) found that 12-15 year-old adolescents reported more conflict with adults than did those of 16-18 years, no problem peak was found at fourteen in their sample. To complicate the situation further, it also appears that the incidence of depression increases during adolescence, rising substantially in older individuals (Forehand, Neighbours, & Wierson, 1991). Hence the relationship between adolescent problems and age appears to depend upon the specific variable selected.

### The Influence Of Gender

Another important differentiating factor in this area of research is that of gender, which again produces a variety of outcomes. It has been suggested that males report more difficulties with study habits (Chaudhari, 1976); that they experience twice as many educational and school discipline problems as girls, and have more difficulty with peer-group relationships in their teenage years (Collins & Harper 1974; Friedman, 1991; Esser et al, 1990). Adolescent males are likewise thought to have more problems in coping with authority, controlling their behaviour, and maintaining their self-image (Porteous, 1985). In addition, males have been found to show more concern over existential issues, social interaction, and educational and career issues than have girls (Friedman, 1991).

Females have been reported as worrying more frequently (Gallagher et al, 1992); being more concerned about their appearance (Chaudhari, 1976; Violato & Holden,

1988; Friedman, 1991); being more bothered by cliques than male students (Armacost 1989); experiencing higher levels of emotional distress (Caspar, Belanoff & Offer 1996); reacting with stronger emotional tone (Porteous, 1985; Brown & Cohen, 1988; Gavin & Furman, 1989); having a higher frequency of mental health problems (McGee & Stanton, 1992); demonstrating double the level of incidence for depression prevailing amongst males (Fleming, Offord & Boyle, 1989); resorting more often to substance abuse or registering more concern about their weight (McGee & Stanton, *op. cit.*); ruminating more frequently about their family or worrying more about having an unhappy marriage themselves (Gillies, 1989; Collins & Harper, 1974; Friedman, 1991); experiencing more conflict with their parents (McGee & Stanton, *op. cit.*); and attempting to seek help more often (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989). By way of explanation for findings such as these, Rutter (1975) has suggested that girls are more likely to respond to problems through manifesting anxiety or depression symptoms, in contrast to the aggression and anti-social behaviour produced by boys.

Although it may appear that a clear delineation of characteristics between the sexes has been established from the foregoing research, in fact the situation is not quite so clear-cut, because there is a third set of findings which supports a more cautious interpretation. This set of studies incorporates two main elements, firstly those investigations reporting conflicting outcomes, and secondly those studies which report no difference between the sexes during adolescence, on the variables measured.

Those outcomes which appear to be at variance with each other embrace the issue of education and career concerns. Two studies report a preponderance of boys, (Collins & Harper, 1974; Friedman, 1991) and three the predominance of girls,

(Porteous, 1985; Gillies, 1989; Mcgee & Stanton, 1992). All five studies administered questionnaires, and included young people in their mid teens, yet boys showed a higher frequency of concern in the U.S.A. and Israel, while the same finding apparently applied to girls in Ireland and New Zealand. However, in the Irish sample, girls actually showed most concern specifically about employment - a key local issue, and the New Zealand sample was a single-sex study, so that these findings may not in fact be directly opposed to each other.

In the case of studies which report no difference in problem-occurrence between the sexes, a number of variables have been reported. Spirito et al (1991) were unable to differentiate between boys and girls in terms of the frequency with which problems were reported. Likewise, Armacost (1989) demonstrated no difference in the frequency of their four most common problems between the sexes at 13 or 14 years of age. Branwhite (1994) recorded a non-significant difference between the sexes in the frequency of reports of emotionally-loaded events for young adolescents. Forehand, Neighbours & Wierson (1991) found no significant differences between adolescent boys and girls in reaction to parental divorce, and Goodyer, Wright & Altham (1990) noted that there was parity between the sexes in the influence of social achievement upon emotional disturbance. Similarly, Cohen, Burt & Bjork (1987) found that the influence of life-events upon psychological dysfunction in the teenage years did not differ significantly for either sex. Gove & Herb (1974) have suggested that by late adolescence, girls appear to be under at least as much, if not more stress than boys.

### The Influence Of Culture

To conclude this section of the discussion, brief mention should also be made of the influence of culture upon the pattern of problems reported by adolescents. For example, while money problems have been cited as a primary concern in American, Canadian, and Asian samples, (Ziv & Shauber 1972; Chaudhari, 1976) the former study found that Israeli teenagers were more concerned about social relationships. The latter author also reported that Canadian students indicated more concerns regarding philosophy of life issues, while Asian adolescents demonstrated a higher frequency of health concerns.

From a middle-eastern perspective, Saleh, (1987) noted that in the context of Arab-Islamic culture established conventions of maintaining positive standing in the company of others may render group counselling for personal problems inappropriate. Indeed, Abal & Hornby, (1994) found that the counsellor roles most strongly supported by 300 Kuwaiti high-school students were those of providing information about educational opportunities, assisting students with educational plans, and conducting classroom-level guidance activities.

In a different climate of opinion, Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, (1993) found that although Australian and Finnish adolescents showed an overall concern for the major developmental issues appropriate to their age group, Australians were more interested in leisure pursuits and more concerned about health and global issues than were their Finnish counterparts. Irish adolescents have also demonstrated considerable interest in

leisure activities, however Fitzgerald, Joseph, Hayes, and O'Reagan, (1995) found that they gave greatest endorsement to passive pursuits like listening to music and watching T.V., followed by some form of social interaction, such as having friends to visit or going to parties.

Cultural differences between adolescents have also been apparent in the context of a contemporary problem which has challenged many adults - the threat of nuclear war. Gillie's (1989) Nottingham study found that almost 1 in 3 young persons registered this concern, a level which falls towards the middle of the range available for the other countries. The lowest reported level of incidence (12%) derives from an American sample, (Goldenring & Doctor, 1986) in contrast with just over 50% for a group of Canadian adolescents (Goldberg, Lacombe, Leison, Ross & Sommers, 1985). These data compare with 81% for a teenage sample in Finland, (Solantaus, Rimpela & Rahkonen, 1985); and 99% in a study of Russian adolescents (Chivian, Mack, Waletzley, Lazaroff, Doctor & Goldenring, 1985), suggesting that concern about nuclear war may be more widespread in continental Europe.

On a slightly different but no less meaningful note for secondary-level students, Porteous (1985) has noted that more restrictive attitudes towards sexual issues prevailed in Irish teenagers compared to their English counterparts. Appropriately, in light of the cultural differences referred to above, Porteous concluded that professionals cannot rely on their own experiences as a guide to adolescent culture, a point which applies with equal force to earlier aspects of the discussion presented here. Overall, it is clear there

can be little doubt that adolescents experience problems in day to day living, even though the effects may be mediated by other variables.

### Synopsis of The Research on Adolescent Problems

#### Frequency of Adolescent Problems

In answer to the question of whether adolescents have problems, there is substantive evidence from both the mental health and the educational research literature that they do. Furthermore, much of the evidence suggests the existence of multiple problems in this age group. For example, Branwhite (1994) reported an average of almost six stressful life-events for early adolescents, and Berden, Althaus & Verhulst (1990) found that negative life-event occurrences rose significantly as adolescence progresses. The average number of personal problems reported during adolescence ranges from lows of 1.82 (Friedman, 1991); 2.60 (Vandewiele, 1979); and 3.30 (Collins & Harper, 1974); to highs of 25 (Mooney, 1942); 33.45 (Garrison & Cunningham, 1952); and even to 48.6 in a sample of adolescent girls (Abel & Gingles, 1965). However, the range of this data may also indicate variation in the approach of different researchers.

### Studies Featuring School-Focussed Problems

Indications of school-focussed problems were found in seven mental health self-report studies, and in six educational research investigations. The mental health studies included those of Dubow et al (1990); Esser et al (1990); Gillies (1989); McGee & Stanton (1992); Spirito et al (1991); Stark et al (1989); and Yamamoto et al (1987). Educational research contributions included Abel & Gingles (1965); Armacost (1989); Friedman (1991); Garrison & Cunningham (1952); Vandeweile (1979); and Violato & Holden (1988). These studies suggest that concerns about school are consistently reported during the adolescent years.

### Studies Featuring Career-Focussed Problems

There is recurrent evidence of career concerns during the adolescent years. These are addressed by three recent studies in the mental health tradition, (Kurdek, 1987; Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, 1994; and McGee & Stanton, 1992) together with twelve educational investigations, (Abel & Gingles, 1965; Chaudhari, 1976; Collins & Harper, 1974; Friedman, 1991; Gallagher, Millar, Hargie & Ellis, 1992; Gillies, 1989; Mooney, 1942; Porteous & Fisher, 1980; Porteous & Kelleher, 1987; Vandewiele, 1979; Violato & Holden, 1988; and Yamamoto et al, 1987). These studies offer some reassurance that adolescent concerns reflect traditional social values.

### Studies Featuring Family-Focussed Problems

Evidence for the existence of family-based adolescent apprehensions has been provided by four mental health studies, (and McGee & Stanton, 1992; Nurmi et al, 1994; Spirito et al 1991; Yamamoto et al 1987); buttressed by four enquires in educational contexts (Collins & Harper, 1974; Porteous & Fisher, 1980; Porteous & Kelleher, 1987; and Branwhite, 1992). Recent research consequently suggests that adolescents commonly maintain a focus upon concerns about their family.

### Studies Featuring Self-Focussed Problems

The self as a focus of concern during adolescence is recorded by five recent mental-health studies and six surveys from education. From within the mental health focus, the studies include those of Esser et al (1990); Kurdek (1987); McGee & Stanton (1992); Sobal (1987); and Yamamoto et al (1987). These findings were complemented by six studies from an educational orientation, (Branwhite, 1994; Collins & Harper, 1974; Porteous & Fisher, 1980; Porteous & Kelleher, 1987; Violato & Holden, 1988; and Friedman, 1991). This research provides some empirical backing for theoretical predictions about the existence of self-concern in adolescence.



## Studies Featuring Socially-Focussed Problems

Social interaction problems are referred to seven mental health studies, (Armacost, 1989; Esser, Schmidt & Woerner, 1990; Kurdek, 1987; McGee & Stanton, 1992; Stark, Spirito, Williams & Geuvremont, 1989; Spirito, Stark, Grace & Stamoulis, 1991; Yamamoto, Soliman, Parsons & Davies, 1987). Likewise, interpersonal conflicts are mentioned in eight educational studies, (Abel & Gingles, 1965; Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Branwhite, 1992; Collins & Harper, 1974; Friedman, 1991; Porteous & Fisher, 1980; Porteous & Kelleher, 1987; and Violato & Holden, 1988). Although problems of this type are not the most frequently endorsed, they are clearly meaningful for a substantial number of secondary students.

## Conclusion

As the foregoing evidence on adolescent problems illustrates, the findings of research in this field vary considerably, although in major respects, mental health and educational research studies appear to complement each other. From the work of those researchers who have actually asked adolescents to report on the extent of their problems, it is clear that adolescent concerns regarding their education, their career, their relationships, and themselves are commonplace. Moreover, as research efforts have expanded, so the range of specific problems reported has shown increasing diversity. However, in general it appears that greater attention has been given to the emotional status of adolescents by mental-health workers, and to their academic status by educational researchers. Given evidence of adolescent problems, a related question is that of whom they might turn to

for help. There is consequently a need to know much more about the ecology of adolescent support-seeking, and it is this topic which forms the subject-matter of the next section of the review.

### Part Three: Research On Seeking Support In Adolescence

#### Introduction

Insofar as children are guided into asking for help by their parents, we might expect that in the course of growing up, adolescents have become practised in seeking support from adults. Indeed, we might reasonably expect that they would do so when problems arise in school. Hence, the question arises of how far research may be able to illuminate the overall pattern of adolescent support-seeking behaviour.

Lewis (1981) for example, suggests an age-related trend in choice of helper during adolescence. In this study, a sample of 108 twelve to seventeen year-olds were asked to provide audio-taped advice for a peer. Results indicated that while 21% of the 12-13 year olds mentioned referral to an independent specialist, this proportion rose to 46% in students of 15, and to 62% by the age of seventeen. This particular trend was tempered, however, by an interesting parallel. An increasing number of older students also made reference to the possibility that adults have vested interests. The proportion of adolescents supporting this view climbed from 35% in the 13-14 year old group, through 48% for the 15 year-olds, and as high as 74% of the 17 year-old students. Although

Lewis also reported no age-related change in advice to seek help from parents or peers, this study suggests that it may be prudent to expect conditional adolescent acceptance of adult assistance.

### Seeking Support From Teachers

Encouragingly, some studies lend credence to the view that adolescents may at times feel willing to consult with school personnel. From a questionnaire study of 2,046 adolescents in four Manchester comprehensive schools, Murray & Thompson (1985) discovered that 70% of the students believed that teachers not only helped them to learn, but also thought that they were willing to listen, to help, and to give good advice. Consonant with the positive aspects of the foregoing study, Raviv et al (1990) determined that the influence of professionals in schools actually increased during the adolescent years, at least in the domain of formal knowledge.

One notable basis for student consultation with teachers seems likely to be found in the degree of affiliation existing across generations within the classroom. An early investigation by Dorhout (1983) concluded that both primary and secondary school pupils valued personal-social characteristics of teachers over their cognitive-intellectual attributes. This study found that it was more important to students that their teachers were friendly or would make the classroom pleasant, than that they could think logically or were expert in their subject. Later work by Moos & Trickett (1974) also Fisher & Fraser (1983a) undelines an adolescent preference for teacher friendliness rather than

teacher authority. High school students in these studies preferred more teacher friendliness but not more teacher control.

Significantly in the above context, two further studies, (Galbo, 1981; & Galbo, 1983) showed that students drawn from American high-school samples were satisfied with the quality of relationship which they experienced with their teachers. In the later of these two investigations, Galbo (1983) interviewed a group of 31 adolescents (14 males & 17 females) between 16 & 17 years of age, all of whom were able and highly motivated students. In most cases the adolescents in this sample wanted to discuss their problems, ask advice from the significant teacher, or simply share adult company and interests. Whatever the students' goals however, the adult qualities for which they stated a preference included those of appearing interested, listening, being friendly, showing a sense of humour, and proving trustworthy.

Reinforcement of this pattern of desirable adult qualities emerged from a different research context in a study carried out by Branwhite (1988) which addressed a range of adolescent preferences in secondary school settings. In a sample of 595 adolescents, drawn from six different schools, 58% indicated that they had a strong preference for teachers to be empathic in the manner in which they related to students. More specifically, the teacher behaviours which adolescents perceived as demonstrating empathy included being friendly, listening, staying calm, giving encouragement, using humour, and dealing fairly with problems. Three of these features (being friendly, listening, and using humour) are identical with Galbo's (1983) findings despite variations in teenage culture between the U.S.A. and the U.K. and the substantive difference in the size of the two samples.

Some further appreciation of the position which teachers occupy in the world of adolescents is forthcoming from the work of Bloom & Sosniak (1981). These researchers observed that talented adolescents tended to nominate teachers amongst the significant adults in their lives, and likewise, Arnold, Budd, & Miller (1988) noted that 29% of their sample of teenagers viewed teachers as an important source of factual career knowledge. Indeed, in reviewing the literature on teachers as significant adults, Galbo (1988) commented that adolescents apparently want teachers to show rather more interest in them, although this suggestion implies a degree of selectivity on the part of young people attending school. One possible implication is that adolescents only want to become more frequently engaged by the teachers whom they themselves prefer, and Galbo (1994) has reported that adolescents favour caring teachers.

Adolescent preference for teachers who show empathic qualities is also of broader interest, in considering how to develop successful counselling approaches with this age-group, since empathy is generally regarded as a desirable, if not essential characteristic for counsellors. Hence it might appear that teachers who have adopted empathic behaviours might be sought out by adolescents with personal problems as a major source of support. Yet according to the work of Armacost (1989;1990) this hypothesis should be viewed with caution, since it was found that adolescent males perceive classroom teachers as significantly less accessible or sensitive in their interactions with students than did adolescent females. Moreover, available evidence would suggest, perhaps surprisingly, that there is no strong empirical support for the notion that students wish to engage in personal consultation with their teachers.

The expectation that adolescents are generally wanting to seek teacher-assistance with their personal problems has actually been challenged by some researchers. For example, Galbo (1989) in a review of the literature on adolescent views of teachers as significant others, concluded that not more than 10% of adolescents nominate teachers as significant adults in their lives. Moreover, Galbo (1983) found that it was ministers of religion who were the non-related adults chosen most frequently by American adolescents as significant others, while Soares & Soares (1974) found significant differences in the way that adolescents perceived themselves and the way that they were perceived by their teachers.

Hendry, Roberts, & Glendinning (1992) have suggested that one possible explanation for the reluctance of adolescents to select teachers as significant others may be found in a perception on the part of some students that teachers are more likely to adopt a challenging stance than a supportive one. Continuing this general line of evidence, Berndt & Miller (1989) found that teachers were not amongst adults regarded as having a significant influence by students in their sample. Likewise, Hendry et al (op. cit.) concluded that Scottish adolescents did not strongly identify teachers as role-models for young people of their age.

Furthermore, 50% of Murray & Thompson's (1985) sample of Manchester adolescents believed that teachers demonstrated favouritism or bossiness, were boring, and made too many rules. In the most recent study of its type, Keys and Fernandes (1992) reported on the attitudes of just over 2,000 students attending 83 U.K. secondary schools, for the National Commission on Education. Amongst their more

significant findings, the authors reported that around 40% of the sample had not discussed their own school work (let alone personal problems) with their teachers during the year of the survey.

### Seeking Support From Counsellors

It could be hypothesised of course that because of their human-relations training, school counsellors should enjoy greater student popularity than teachers. Indeed, in support of this proposal, positive early adolescent perspectives on counselling at secondary level were presented in a small scale survey completed by Hooper (1978). This study reported on 142 students from a West of England comprehensive school, 50% of whom had seen a counsellor who followed a client-centred model of practice. Specific reasons given by students for going to see the counsellor ranged from difficulty in relationships with teachers (76%); to problems with school work (57%); problems with friends (56%); difficulties with parents (51%); and personal issues, (50%). Career items were nominated least frequently (45%), so that inter-personal conflicts appeared to be the major precursor of counsellor contact, allowing that the percentages given represent only the consulting students, and not the whole school population.

From a larger scale survey, Armacost (1990) reported that around 80% of a 1,301 student sample indicated that teachers were available for help outside of class, although 55% stated, in common with secondary students in a number of other surveys, that they would not feel comfortable talking to school staff about personal problems.

However, amongst those individuals in the student body who indicated that they were willing to consult secondary-school professionals, 34% cited counsellors, 22% a sports-coach, and 18% some other member of the school staff, with only 13% nominating teachers, so that counsellors appeared to be the most popular choice by a clear margin.

Modest student support in favour of self-referral to a counsellor was reported by Meagher and Clark (1982) who surveyed a sample of 473 secondary students. These workers discovered that while only a minority (12%) emerged as willing to discuss serious personal problems with counsellors in school, only half this number (6%) reported discussion of personal problems with teachers. A similarly cautious outcome regarding counselling was derived by West et al (1991) in a survey of 125 Illinois high-school students. The largest single group of respondents (29%) indicated that they did not like to tell an unfamiliar individual about personal topics, and 18% felt afraid that a school counsellor might pass on to other people information which the adolescent conveyed in the course of a personal counselling session. A further 16% of the students implied that they would be embarrassed to reveal their real concerns to a school counsellor.

Siann, Draper & Cosford (1982) conducted a Scottish investigation in the form of an analogue study, in which only hypothetical problems were considered. Nonetheless, the results indicated an adolescent view that counsellors could be effective for resolving school-based concerns, and the authors concluded that adolescents perceived counsellors as more likely to be effective in resolving in school problems. This conclusion was supported by the work of Hutchinson & Reagan (1989). Adolescent perceptions of the positive impact of school counsellors also include aspects of school life such as study



programmes, (Haughey & Bowman, 1980) class changes, and vocational issues, (Murgatroyd, 1977; Leviton, 1977; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

However, further research on adolescent opinion quells any impulse to regard counsellors as the major resource for solving the personal problems of adolescents in the school system. For instance, Remley & Albright (1988) employing interview techniques, trained 11 researchers to gain more in-depth information than could be elicited from questionnaires. From the results of 44 student interviews conducted in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C., they found that students held mainly negative perceptions of high-school counsellors, and were confused as to the counsellors' purpose. This untoward finding was backed by Skuy, Hoar, Smith & Westaway (1985) who further concluded from their research that guidance personnel were not regarded by teenage students as being important for any major area of adolescent concern. Leviton (1977) adds to the range of student concerns about being exposed to counselling in school, by attesting to the presence of adolescent anxiety regarding self-disclosure. This survey of 550 high-school students of 15-17 years old in Minnesota revealed that whereas just over a half of them would disclose personal problems to a friend, only 4% felt willing to do so to a counsellor.

The possible existence of an adolescent rationale for selective self-referral to school counsellors is buttressed further by an investigation of the attitudes of senior high school students from Indiana, which was completed by Hutchinson & Reagan (1989). These researchers acquired individual ratings from 1,734 respondents in 10 randomly selected schools, and the ranking of their accumulated data comes across with considerable impact.

From a 24-item rating-scale, the top 10 items were supported from 61% to 90% of the students, and every one of these items related to academic and career issues. More intimate concerns such as conflict with peers, or the occurrence of personal problems, only emerged at or below rank 15 in the data tabulations. This is not to say of course that American high-school students in this sample had no personal problems, (in fact between 30% and 40% indicated that they did) but the authors found it ironic that while many personal problems were identified, the students obviously felt that they would be more comfortable talking to their counsellors about school-related administrative concerns.

The existence of this particular adolescent preference is also upheld by Wells and Ritter (1979) who sought the opinions of 550 adolescent students regarding the appropriateness of certain topics for discussion with a counsellor. Once again, academic or administrative issues were classed by about 80% of this research sample as suitable discussion topics, while the citation levels for personal or interpersonal problems by contrast remained within single figures. Similarly, Haughey & Bowman (1980) canvassed the views of Canadian students across 3 separate school districts, only to discover that family problems were not considered as valid for counsellor-student review by most of the participants. However, in an outcome which replicated a finding by Leviton, (1977) 54% of the Canadian sample were ready to discuss truancy with their school counsellor, suggesting that perhaps counsellors may be valued at times by secondary students because of an inferred capacity to speak for students in the upper reaches of a school's management hierarchy.

It seems possible that there may be something more than personal sensitivity about self-disclosure, or uncertainty regarding counsellor trustworthiness which exercises an important influence on student choice of counsellor however. While the foregoing studies suggest that specialist counselling services are not likely to be sought by the majority of secondary school students, there is another source of limitation which also needs to be taken into consideration in accounting for adolescent caution regarding professional helpers. As part of the developmental shift away from dependence towards greater interdependence, there is another group of research studies which demonstrate that the extent of adolescent interaction with adults decreases through the teenage years. This trend has been commented upon by Galbo (1989) who cites supporting evidence from Cervantes (1969); Goodman (1969); Rosenberg (1976); and Newman, Martin & Petersen (1978). Moreover, it may be added that these sources in turn are chronologically bracketed and reinforced by the investigations of Brittain (1963); Sebald and White (1980); Youniss & Smollar (1985); Wintre et al (1988); and Hortacsu (1989).

Both adults and adolescents seemingly recognise that the passage through the teenage years can give rise to a variety of problems. However, since these problems may only be shared with teachers on a limited basis, the latter set of studies brings to the fore the question of whether adolescents may have alternative human resources open to them for personal support.

### Seeking Support From Peers

One pragmatic option may be for adolescents to view members of their own peer-group as a potential problem-solving resource, and this possibility has received considerable research attention. Adolescent reliance upon the supportive resources of other members of their peer-group has been documented by Brittain, (1963); Sebald and White, (1980); Youniss & Smollar, (1985); and Wintre et al (1988) amongst others. Raffaelli & Duckett (1989) suggest that the frequency of communication between adolescents increases with age, and Raviv et al (1990) indicated that it parallels the level attained with parents by the end of the teenage years. This may be a conservative estimate however, since Csikzentmihalyi & Larson (1984) completed a similar study in which the level of peer-communication stood at three times that with family members. The essential point is that both investigations underline the importance which adolescents attribute to communication with their peers.

Other studies suggest that there are clear qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions to peer-level relationships. Brittain (1963) found that peers had a major influence on the type of clothing worn by teenagers, and also that they played an influential role in the development of social values. Similarly, Sebald (1986) determined that peers were important in shaping patterns of adolescent social interaction. Striking a note of social relativity, Buhrmester & Furman (1987) concluded from their survey that during adolescence peers become more important as providers of companionship than parents. Sebald (1986) concluded that whereas parents were consulted about money, career, and purchasing issues, peers were the main source of advice regarding social activities and relationships with the opposite sex. In addition, Barnett, McMinimy,

Flouer & Masbad (1987) noted that adolescents generally favoured peers who were empathically motivated over those who helped for non-empathic reasons.

In keeping with this relative point of view Van Riper (1971) found, from a survey of 735 fourteen year-olds, that high-school students rated their peers above either classroom teachers or school principals for talking about almost anything, although this argument may need to be tempered by Galbo's (1989) suggestion that adolescents are more likely to communicate with teachers over school-based issues such as academic problems or membership of special interest groups.

Gender preferences may also exercise some influence over choice of helper, even within an adolescent peer-group. After canvassing the opinion of 1,972 urban high-school students, Robinson, Morrow, Kigin & Lindemann (1991) trained 8 adolescent students to act as peer-counsellors. As in a number of studies of adult clients, a higher level of female self-referrals was extant, and overall, most students indicated a preference for seeing a female peer-counsellor. Northman (1985) also found that girls were the most commonly preferred helpers in a mixed-sex sample. However, the intimacy factor did not appear to come into play between adolescent clients and peer counsellors to the extent that it often has with adolescents and adult counsellors in educational settings, since the range of problems discussed with the former group of helpers included alcohol-related issues, concerns about drugs, worries about parental divorce, and more acutely, questions about suicide.

Nominations of peer-support have been found to become more frequent during adolescence (Hortacsu,1989) and the extent of adolescent conformity with peer

behaviour is thought to peak during mid-adolescence (Berndt, 1979). A general increase in the level of intimacy of relationships with peers has also been reported during the adolescent years, to the point where several studies support the view that by approximately 15 years of age, adolescent relationships can reflect higher levels of intimacy than those which prevail between teenage children and their parents. (See, for example, La Gaipa, 1975; Kon & Losenkov, 1978; Reisman & Shorr, 1978; and Hunter and Youniss, 1982.)

### Seeking Support From Friends

In terms of the quality of relationships between adolescents and their peers, friendship links should also have an important part to play, since their very existence suggests that an intimacy dynamic could influence the quality of communication taking place between young people. In this connection, it has been reported that during the adolescent years, friends are preferred to parents as a source of company during leisure time (Wright & Keple, 1981). Indeed, the same authors found that girls reported how they also regarded their friends as more rewarding to be with than their parents. Similarly, in the investigation of Millen & Roll (1977) boys have indicated that they view their male friends as having equal or superior standing to their mothers, and same-sex friends have been identified, along with mothers, as preferred targets for communication (Hortacsu, op. cit.).

Kandel & Lesser (1969) have also recorded an adolescent preference for friends as a source of advice for personal problems, while Friedman (1991) noted that friends were regarded as the most important source of advice for over one third of the 15-17 year old adolescents in his sample. It has also been suggested that for the purpose of seeking

advice regarding relationships with their peers, adolescents regard their friends as generally having more to offer than their parents (Hunter, 1985). The work of Blyth, Hill, and Thiel (1982) has implied that adolescents favour relationships with friends of both the same age and the same sex as a source of personal support, a proposition upheld by Rivenbark (1971) who detected higher levels of intimacy prevailing within same-sex relationships during adolescence. Thus it appears that young people widely regard their friends as an important means of assistance, with the possible exception of cross-sex relationships during late adolescence, a situation for which an increase in problems has been reported (Stark, Spirito, Williams, & Geuvremont, 1991).

#### Seeking Support From Parents

Insofar as patterns of communication are initially acquired at home, and have to be maintained over time in order that personal needs can be met as children grow older, it seems reasonable to expect that adolescents might build on past experience to seek advice from other family members. A number of studies bear this expectation out. Parents have been nominated as an important source of consultation by adolescents in the research samples of Wintre, Hicks, McVey & Fox (1988); Friedman (1991); and Hendry et al (1992); while Sebald (1986) noted in a longitudinal study that while there had been a down-turn in adolescent orientation to parents during the 1960's & 1970's, a recovery had taken place during the 1980's. Indeed, there is evidence that both sexes regard their parents as the primary source of practical wisdom available to them, (Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Kon & Losenkov, 1978) including decisions about their future (Smith, 1976).

Although the above assumption may appear to be supported mainly by the work of American researchers, (see, for instance, Berndt & Miller, 1989) in fact it is bolstered further by some recent U.K. studies. Studies by Porteous & Fisher (1980) and Siann, Draper, & Cosford (1982) have found that British adolescents mention parents frequently as available sources of help. This finding had been repeated in a survey of 360 11-16 year olds carried out a over a decade later by Hendry, Roberts, & Glendinning (1992). Whitney and Smith (1992) have reported that secondary level students are significantly more likely to tell someone at home that they have been bullied than they are to tell a teacher. Similarly, Keys & Fernandes (1993) noted that in a national sample of 2,140 secondary students from years seven and nine, over two-and-a-half times as many adolescents indicated that they had consulted parents for career advice as had approached teachers on the same topic.

#### Seeking Support From Mothers

Research suggests that as far as parent contact goes, there is a tendency for adolescents to favour consulting their mothers. Hendry, Roberts & Glendinning (op. cit.) reported that mothers have been identified by 56% of their sample of teenage children as their most significant family member. Kandel & Lesser (1972) have identified a high level of influence and close concordance of values between adolescents and their mothers. There are indications that young people are more open with their mothers (Barnes & Olsen, 1985) and disclose more to them (Wiebe and Williams, 1972; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987). For advice on complex problems, mothers have been nominated as the resource



person of first choice by both sexes, (Kon & Losenkov, 1978; Kandel & Lesser, 1972). However, in contrast to boys, girls have reported doing more decision-making with their mothers, and having a more satisfactory relationship with them (Newman, 1989).

Adolescents perceive their mothers' expertise to encompass social relationships, general knowledge about life, personal feelings, and conventions about appearance, (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv & Peleg, 1990) while they also experience them as more accepting and more understanding in handling problems (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Given this information, it is hardly surprising that other investigators have found that during their teenage years children communicate more frequently with their mothers, (Barnes & Olsen, 1985) and report in turn a higher level of satisfaction with the communication that they receive from maternal sources.

#### Seeking Support From Fathers

As might be anticipated from the previous paragraph, contemporary research suggests that adolescents appear somewhat less appreciative of their fathers. Nonetheless, areas of expertise attributed by young persons to their fathers include formal knowledge, science, and politics (Raviv et al, 1990) and they are a recognised source of practical advice, if not employed for this purpose to quite the extent that mothers have been (Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Kon & Losenkov, 1978). Moreover, Wright & Keple (1981) found that adolescents perceived their fathers to be no less responsive or helpful when approached than were their mothers. However, fathers have been identified by teenage sons & daughters as inclined to initiate fewer conversations than mothers, and to give less

recognition to issues of adolescent concern, (Noller & Callen, 1990) also to communicate in a more judgmental manner (Youniss & Smoller, 1985).

Adolescent girls have indicated that their fathers did not provide as much personal support as their mothers (Wright & Keple, 1981) and that their fathers did not seem to know them as individuals as well as their mothers did (Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987). Fathers seem to gain somewhat greater credit from boys, who have been found by Hunter & Youniss (1982) to classify them as more nurturing than mothers. Nevertheless, boys report disclosing equivalent amounts of personal information to both male and female parents (Wiebe & Williams, 1972).

Somewhat paradoxically, boys have also reported (Wright & Keple, *op. cit.*) that their father is more difficult to get along with than their mother, suggesting that sex-differences in adolescent opinion are not clear-cut, at least to the extent that either same-sex or opposite-sex support are universally preferred. Indeed, even the preference for parental assistance is not a universal one, since parents are not favoured as helpers by every student in the studies referred to. Northman's (1985) survey of 238 New York 8-19 year olds in fact found that a generally low rating of parents as effective helpers was unaffected by student age, sex, or problem situation. Furthermore, this somewhat adverse trend in research findings also needs to be placed in the context of a review by Phares & Compas (1992) which implicates both mothers and fathers, but notably the latter, in the development of adolescent psychopathology.

## Synopsis of Research on Seeking Support in Adolescence

The available literature suggests that when adolescents have problems, they are likely to seek support both within and between generations of potential helpers. Moreover, this process often appears to be conducted on a selective basis. Regardless of the expectations which professionals might hold regarding their ability to support young people, available evidence suggests that adolescents do not regard them as the helpers of first choice.

### Studies Featuring Support From Peers

A breakdown of the research in this area reveals that for personal problems, adolescents most frequently seek support from their peers. Adolescent consumer studies supporting this contention included Barnett et al (1987); Berndt (1979); Blyth et al (1982); Bo (1989); Buhrmester & Furman (1987); Csikzentmihalyi & Larson (1984); Frankel (1990); Hendry et al (1989); Herriott (1963); McDill & Coleman (1965); Rivenbark (1971); Sebald (1986) Van Riper (1971); Wright & Keple (1981).

### Studies Featuring Support From Parents

Further studies were found in which parents constituted the favoured group of resource persons for adolescents with personal problems, and these incorporated the work of Barnes & Olsen (1985); Eme et al (1979); Hendry et al (1992); Hunter & Youniss (1988); Noller & Bagi, (1985); Noller & Callan (1990); Porteous & Fisher (1980); Siann, Draper & Cosford (1982); Simpson (1962); Wiebe & Williams (1972); Youniss & Ketterlinus (1987); and Youniss & Smollar (1985).

### Studies Featuring Support From Parents and Friends

A third set of research investigations attests to an adolescent tendency to discuss personal difficulties both with parents and with friends. This set includes the research of Arnold, Budd & Miller (1988); Brittain (1963); Friedman (1991); Hendry et al (1992); Hortacsu (1989); Hunter (1985); Kandel & Lesser (1969); Keats et al (1983); Kon & Losenkov (1978); Murgatroyd (1977); Raffaelli & Duckett (1989); Raja, McGee & Stanton (1991); Raviv et al (1990); Wilks (1986); and Wintre et al (1988). It therefore appears that different categories of helper need not be used on a mutually exclusive basis, and that informal sources of support are widely employed for helping with personal problems.

## Studies Featuring Support From School Professionals

Studies in which adolescents with personal problems favour discussion with school personnel do not seem to be an outstanding feature of this body of research literature. Hence it is tempting to conclude that in the domain of personal problems, the influence of teachers is often out-weighed by the influence of parents and peers. Indeed, this indication of a trend away from professional helpers is sustained firstly by investigations indicating that adolescents with personal problems did not want to discuss them with teachers, (Galbo, 1981 & 1983; Hendry et al 1992; and Laframboise, Dauphinais & Rowe, 1978). Secondly, it is reinforced by further studies in which adolescents avoided initiating counsellor contact (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Leviton, 1977; Meager & Clark, 1982; Wells & Ritter, 1979; and West, Kayser, Overton & Saltmarsh, 1991).

Before dismissing the supportive role of professional helpers completely however, it is important to note adolescent opinion supporting their involvement for educational and career issues. Here six studies have portrayed student willingness to seek advice from teachers (Arnold et al 1988; Galbo 1981, 1983; Laframboise et al (1978); Murgatroyd, 1977; and Raviv et al, 1990). An additional four studies reveal readiness to consult school counsellors for the same reasons, (Haughey & Bowman 1980; Hutchinson & Reagan 1979; Leviton 1977; and Wells & Ritter, 1979). Two more investigations suggest that careers personnel are valued for their professional advice (Arnold, Budd & Miller, 1988; and Cherry & Gear, 1987).

In addition, parents have been identified by adolescents as helpful regarding educational and career matters by eight investigations, (Cherry & Gear 1987;

Friedman, 1991; Hendry et al, 1989; Hunter, 1988; Raviv et al, 1990; Sebald, 1986; Smith, 1976; and Wilks, 1986). One or two more studies found that friends were considered as an additional source of assistance in deciding upon academic issues (Friedman, 1991; and Van Riper, 1991).

### Conclusion

There could be several possible explanations as to why young people of school age are selective in choosing others as sources of support. To begin with, the peer-group can offer a high proportion of shared experience. Peers can also be involved in adolescent experience with a degree of recency that adults cannot. Support-seeking is also likely to be influenced by the availability of helping agents. For example, mothers may offer a window of opportunity which is much greater than school professionals are able to provide. (Notably, while schools are open for approximately 192 days a year, parents are likely to be available 365 days.)

Quality of relationship (e.g. in terms of intimacy) is also likely to be influential, since this enables teenagers to judge the extent to which they can trust any potential helper to understand and support them. Clearly professionals, friends, and relatives provide differing levels of intimacy, formality, and responsiveness. Professionals may also be handicapped in the world of adolescence because they are not usually able to provide longer-term support in the way that parents or friends often can. Taken overall, it seems likely that a number of factors render education professionals less attractive as sources of support for adolescents with personal problems.

This is not of course to say that secondary students never seek help from school-based helpers. The author has in fact observed such requests being made of teachers, and had many more reported by senior teaching staff. Indeed, the issues dealt with can reflect an acute state of student need. It therefore appears possible that the availability of significant others may operate as a filter system which is robust enough to contain the majority of low-level student problems. However, where interpersonal attachments are poorly developed, or are not available at the time of need, and when problems are sufficiently acute, then recourse to formal support options may be rendered more probable.

#### **Section Four: Adolescent Views Of Help Received**

##### Introduction

Mann and Bourdin (1991) in a critique of psychotherapy research on adolescent clients argue that future investigations with adolescents should pay increased attention to client-related factors, since these may moderate treatment outcomes to a significant extent. Accordingly, consideration will next be given to studies which have reported adolescent perceptions of help received from adults. Once more the majority of the investigations (in this case approximately two thirds of them) have been carried out during the last 10 years, suggesting considerably increased interest in adolescent opinion in recent times.

## Patterns Of Service Usage

The previous section of the review included findings which suggested that adolescents may be selective in seeking personal support from professional helpers. There is another group of studies which indicates that secondary students sometimes approach school professionals for support. For example, Hooper (1978) reported that in a survey of 142 students in an English secondary school, problems with teachers formed the most common reason for referral to a school counsellor. Accordingly, research on student perceptions of the help which they have been given forms the substance of the next area to be considered.

A large-scale investigation has been reported by Gray (1980). This author provides data on a sample of 3,870 Scottish school leavers for the academic year 1971-72, together with a further sample of 7,992 Highland leavers for 1975-76. From the earlier sample, between 56-58% of the students felt that their teachers had known them well enough to provide advice on educational or career matters. In comparison, only 19% of that sample nominated teachers as advisors for personal problems. (Hence three times more students indicated acceptance of teacher advice on technical matters than on personal issues.)

A similar outcome was derived from the 1975-76 adolescent sample, in that the majority, (up to 57% of the students) indicated that they had received help from teachers and guidance personnel on educational and career issues, while only a small proportion (10%) reported that they had received teacher assistance with personal problems. (In this case, almost six times more students received technical advice from teachers than



accepted personal support). Moreover, even with educational and career problems, a higher proportion of students (65%-76%) cited parents as a source of help, while 43% mentioned receiving the assistance of siblings and friends, as well as that of relatives. Gray concluded from his data that there seemed to be considerable uncertainty on the part of both the Scottish teachers and their pupils about the extent to which the school as an institution should be involved in the personal concerns of students.

In relation to referral to school counsellors, rather than teachers, Lehmanowsky (1991) presented the results of a 33% random sample (N=507) of the 1521 students attending a high-school in Lincoln, Nebraska. This survey followed the implementation of a new service-delivery model which included a shift in emphasis away from students always seeing a specific counsellor towards a more open topic-specialist service. At the end of the school year during which this change was introduced, 82% of the sample indicated that they had received assistance from the counselling service, and 90% of these students reported liking the option of working with a counsellor of their own choice.

From a later survey, (Lehmanowsky 1992; personal communication) the same researcher was able to report findings from a different sample of students (N=984) in the same high school. In this case, 55% of the students sought counselling regarding academic issues. By comparison, only 19% had made contact regarding personal problems, yielding a 3:1 ratio of technical to personal support. These findings compare closely with the results obtained by Gray (op.cit.) for educational issues, and also for personal issues in the first of the two Scottish samples reported. The level for assistance with personal problems in Gray's second sample was much lower.

Further variation in adolescent opinion is shown by Hutchinson & Reagan (1989). In an analysis of the use of school counsellors amongst 1,734 Indiana senior high school students, around 40% reported that they would go to a counsellor about general personal problems. In some contrast, Meagher & Clark's (1982) survey of 473 students attending an Ohio high school revealed that only 6% of their sample recorded that they had discussed a serious personal problem with a counsellor. Moreover, Abal & Hornby (1995) reported that in a sample of 300 secondary students in Kuwait, while 70% suggested that educational issues were important for counsellors, over a third did not consider counselling for personal problems to be important.

Hannon, Breen, Murray, Watson, Hardiman, and O'Higgins (1983) [cited in O'Leary, 1990] similarly confirmed that counsellors were the main source of help over career choices for 95% of the final year Irish secondary students whom they surveyed. Once again, however, it is important to take account of evidence that other sources of help are likely be called upon by secondary school students. Sproles (1988) reporting on a survey of 200 West Virginia high-school students, found that while 24% of her sample indicated that counsellors had been helpful with career choices, parent support was alluded to by 49%, and teacher support by 62%, while 72% referred to assisting themselves. This study suggests that secondary students may use multiple sources of information in making career decisions.

The above studies, though few in number, tend to confirm the notion that the majority of adolescents actually do not discuss personal problems with either teachers or school counsellors, at least according to data from Scotland, Ireland, and the U.S.A.

Paradoxically, this outcome is probably a helpful one from the point of view of many school professionals involved in student support, for whom the demand to provide quality service for the whole of a school population might prove exceedingly difficult to meet. Having fewer student referrals to contend with might imply that a higher quality of service may be provided for those whose need is greatest.

### Student Take-Up Rates

Even if it were a desirable objective, the task of wholesale engagement of adolescent clients is unlikely to be an easy one, since the evidence on take-up rates for professional support suggests considerable variation. Studies providing percentage data on adolescent take-up rates, without specifying the type of problem involved, have identified from 14% (Morey et al, 1989); through 50% (Hooper, 1978; Sproles, 1988); to 82% (Lehmanowsky, 1991); as having received some form of counselling input. Newport (1976) concluded that in schools with a counselling service, an overall 42% of the students indicated that they had used it. However, it was also found that 29% reported using community support systems, such as those for youth or social services. Porteous & Fisher (1980) published related data broken down by profession for their small-scale Bradford sample. This showed that 23% had approached teachers about a problem, 5% a social worker, 3% a youth worker, 3% a family doctor, and 3% a religious worker.

Seven further investigations refer specifically to educational and career issues. Sample proportions reporting the receipt of professional support ranged from 15%, 24% and 25% (Newport, 1976; Sproles, 1988; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986); through 40%,

to 55%, and 58% (Lehmanowsky, 1992; Gray, 1980); and as high as 95% (Hannon et al, 1983; Murray et al, 1983).

Another group of six surveys report personal reasons for seeking support. These yield much lower figures of 6% (Meagher & Clark, 1982); and 10% (Gray, 1980); to 15% (Newport, 1976); through 19% & 21%, (Gray, 1980; Lehmanowsky, 1992; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986); to 50% (Seifert, 1985). These studies support earlier research suggesting that adolescents disclose more regarding school-based concerns (West, 1975; White, 1974).

Student take-up rates clearly vary considerably between studies. However, by averaging out the data from the above studies, it appears that approximately 51% of the students met a counsellor to sort out educational or career issues, whereas only 20% saw a counsellor to deal with personal concerns. In contrast with these figures, Neely & Iburg (1989) reported that 60% of their adolescent referrals were for personal reasons, an estimate which runs counter to the trend across the other studies. However, their sample size was small (N=20 students) and the figures were based upon data derived from counsellors rather than directly from the students themselves.

Approximately four fifths of the secondary students responding to published surveys have elected not to discuss personal problems with teachers or counsellors in school. However, the remaining one fifth is a proportion which is probably no less important than the equivalent proportion of U.K. students having special educational needs. There appears to be no *prima facie* reason why students' personal needs should be

regarded as any less deserving of support in school, despite the fact that a different cohort of students may be involved.

### Level of Need and Service Provided

Given that empathic interaction is one of the ideals of the counselling movement, it might be anticipated that few exceptions to this quality of personal assistance would be reported. However, Hutchinson & Bottorff (1986) suggest that significant numbers of students may not have received the level of service which they believed themselves to require. This research team developed a questionnaire about high-school counselling services (on the basis of three 2-hour discussions with a pool of 70 university students) which was administered to a further 250 Indiana undergraduates, who were drawn from 21 states, and represented a client sample from 152 high-school counselling programs.

Indicated differences between the numbers of students who actually received a service in high-school against those who needed it turned out to be considerable. As many as 89% of this Indiana sample indicated that they needed career counselling, but only 40% reported that they had received it. Around 60% stated they had needed personal counselling during the high-school phase of their education, however, just 21% said that this service had been forthcoming.

On the other hand, it did not seem uncommon for students to be assigned a service which they did not require. Counsellors were reported as having delivered some form of educational testing to 37% of the sample when a mere 10% had wanted it. A record-keeping emphasis was referred to in 24% of the cases, but only 3% had listed this as a personal requirement. Finally, 20% had been the subject of attendance checks where merely 1% felt that this was warranted. Thus, as far as direct counselling services were concerned, there was a discrepancy between student requirement and counsellor service in between 39% & 49% of the instances recorded. With indirect counselling services, the range of discrepancy spanned 19-27% of the examples reported. It might be inferred from this data that student concerns were either not identified by the school counselling staff involved, or that they were not a major priority on the professional agenda of the counsellors involved.

#### Evaluation of Help Received

Several studies have set out to explore the adolescent point of view, and clearly secondary students do not lack ideas about the efficacy of the counselling input to which they have been exposed. For example, Poppen & Peters (1965) found that junior high-school students expected to receive more advice than they were given when they talked to school counsellors, whereas counsellors placed more emphasis upon establishing working relationships.

An important determinant of opinion amongst secondary students may be whether or not counsellors deliver the services for which they carry responsibility.

Wiggins & Moody (1987) carried out a large-scale survey of the population of seven suburban and four rural high-schools distributed across four Mid-Atlantic American states, randomly selecting 20-25% of the students at each school for a one-hour interview. Several interesting findings emerged. Firstly, in schools receiving the highest student approval ratings, counsellors spent just over 70% of their professional time in counselling activities, reporting that only 11-12% was assigned to clerical functions. Secondly, those counsellors who spent most of their time in direct contact with students were rated as more effective. This finding suggests that there may be an interaction between counsellor commitment, counsellor competencies, and positive student perceptions.

Thirdly, the schools rated as average or above-average by their student population were those in which counsellors worked through referred problems in short order. This meant within a range of one to five sessions, each of 20-30 minutes duration, so that a total of two and a half hours of counselling time was the maximum student commitment involved. Although student ratings varied to some extent across schools, these findings remained unaffected by differences in the counsellor-client ratio between research locations. Fourthly, the proportion of students indicating that they would recommend counsellor assistance to a good friend varied according to the type of problem under consideration. Over 70% stated that they would make such a recommendation for either an academic or a career concern, compared to 27% for a personal concern.

Another factor to take into account may be found in the interaction between personal motivation of the student and their assessment of counselling. Seifert (1985)

surveyed 1244 students from secondary, lower commercial, and vocational schools in Austria, and concluded that there was a significant relationship between their readiness to participate and their perception of the quality of the programme received. While students with a higher level of vocational maturity appeared to derive more benefit from the guidance programme, from a consumer perspective a more interesting finding was that over 50% of the sample indicated a need for more intensive personal counselling.

Nonetheless, evidence remains to suggest that there is widespread reservation on the part of adolescent consumers regarding the efficacy of counselling interventions. One substantial study which speaks to this issue is that of Chase (1981) who conducted a large-scale survey of 10,478 high school students in 22 states of the U.S.A. Although the majority of the respondents were satisfied with their treatment by counsellors, 33% indicated that they were unhappy with school counselling services. One reason given to explain the sense of dissatisfaction was a lack of help from counsellors in solving personal problems. Students also remarked how they felt that neither school administrators, teachers, nor counsellors took a sufficiently strong interest in them as individuals.

#### Adolescent Satisfaction

An early investigation by Newport (1976) was carried out on 148 sixth-form students in five New Zealand secondary schools. In this investigation, a range of academic, career, and personal issues had been the focus of requests for counsellor assistance on the part of the students. However, in one of the few interview studies to be reported, this



researcher found that only 24% of her sample believed their needs were met by school professionals. The later investigation of Gray (1980) also reported a low level of adolescent satisfaction, with just under a fifth of the sample indicating that personal advice received from guidance teachers had been useful. In a different context, Wells, Morris, Jones & Allen (1978) found that 65% of 40 teenagers attending an adolescent unit felt that they had sorted their problems out. However, follow-up periods varied from 6 to 26 months after discharge, so that the opinions gathered were not contiguous with the intervention provided.

In a study of peer-counselling, Morey, Fulton, Rosen, & Daly, (1989) sampled the opinions of 126 students from a high school in the Rocky Mountains. Around 50% of these adolescents had presented a specific problem during their initial session, mostly to do with educational concerns (65%) although there was also a high rate of referral concerning cross-sex relationships (52%). The least frequently raised topics included alcohol or drug-related issues (22% & 21% respectively). Three quarters of the sample also reported that they were not embarrassed in talking to a peer-counsellor, and 57% indicated that peer-counsellors were good listeners. However, only 38% believed that peer-counsellors had, in turn, been worth listening to. Mean ratings of satisfaction with counsellor helpfulness were highest regarding educational or career issues, and lowest in connection with drug or alcohol problems. The authors concluded that training in listening skills was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for helping students to deal with the concerns of their peers.

Probably the most extensive survey of satisfaction in the adolescent counselling literature has been executed by Engen, Laing & Sawyer (1988) who analysed the

opinions of 31,419 high-school students. Their 10% random sample distributed across Eastern, Central and Western areas of the U.S.A. covered 10 consecutive years between 1973 & 1984.

This research team was able to report that they discovered a steady increase in student satisfaction with guidance counselling, rising from 48% in 1973-74 to 59% in 1983-84. Moreover, no significant relationships emerged between the level of student satisfaction and other variables. These included the type of high-school involved, the kind of instructional program received, (vocational or college orientated) the student's ethnic group, the student's academic rankings at high-school, the student's perceived adequacy of their educational programme at high-school, their need for career planning assistance, or their need for help to handle personal concerns. The researchers went on to perform a multiple regression analysis on a sub-sample of 588 students, to determine whether it would be possible to predict student satisfaction with guidance counselling, but no statistically significant relationships could be detected. Sex, race, class rank, and other variables were apparently unrelated to student satisfaction levels.

It almost goes without saying that since these investigations derive from different circumstances and are not of comparable scope, that comparison of their findings would be an exercise of dubious validity. Moreover, the main body of the research has been carried out in the United States, providing a limited basis for generalisation of the findings across other cultures.

### Adolescent and Professional Views

A very small number of researchers have conducted counselling investigations which have compared opinions of adolescents with those of adults. De Weerd (1986) surveyed 45 teachers and 173 students in two Dutch secondary schools. The education system in Holland apparently mandates that all counsellors are also classroom teachers, and the reported professional ethos is that teachers assume a high level of professional responsibility for the personal development of students. In this European context, both students and teachers agreed that counselling was an appropriate resource for addressing personal problems, and there was a high level of agreement amongst students regarding the goals of counselling. Over 75% of the student sample indicated that counselling meant immediate support, careful attention, reliability, vocational guidance, and the availability of advice or information.

There were also some interesting differences between the views of adolescents and adults in this study. For example, students expressed more satisfaction with the services received than teachers were aware of. In addition, students perceived more results to accrue from counselling than did teachers, while fewer students than teachers thought that changes in the drop-out rate or improvements in client-counsellor relationship would result from counselling. In some ways the adolescent world-view also seemed more pragmatic, in that a smaller proportion of students was identified as expecting dedicated commitment from school counsellors than was apparent amongst the counsellors themselves.

Another publication comparing the views of adolescents with those of adults has resulted from the work of Taylor, Adelman & Boyd (1986) who investigated 24 client-therapist dyads drawn from a special school population of students with learning, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. As is the case with many special school populations, there was a predominance of male students, with a sample of 20 male and four female students, whose ages ranged from 11 to 19 years. From the participant's responses to a 28-item rating scale, the researchers were able to draw several enlightening conclusions. Having observed that there was agreement between both the therapists and the clients that the establishment of conditions for trust was a particularly salient feature of the counselling set-up, the research team noted that the client group also agreed with the therapists regarding the importance of warmth, a client-driven agenda, and a central focus upon client needs.

Against the therapist-group ratings, these students tended to go to the more extreme points of the rating scale. However, it also transpired that student ratings on the sub-scales relevant to counselling climate demonstrated a modest positive correlation ( $r = 0.31$ ) with ratings of the amount of time spent on critical issues during the initial stage of counsellor-contact. In general, adolescent clients who experienced therapy as enhancing their autonomy gave significantly higher ratings on satisfaction at the end of the programme, and likewise, those who perceived therapy as warm and enhancing personal responsibility rated therapy as more important.

Hagborg & Konigsberg (1991) also carried out a comparative investigation of adolescent opinion within a special education setting. In this case the subjects were 45

students enrolled in a school for emotionally disturbed adolescents in New York. The students completed a 10-item rating scale, which yielded several significant outcomes. Firstly, students' perceptions of counselling, after a minimum of 20 individual sessions, were comparable with those of teachers, in that both groups associated progress with school attendance. However, students viewed therapeutic progress to be greater than did teachers, and they did not relate changes occurring in the course of therapy to their academic status, to the presence of conduct disorder, or to high levels of psychological distress, as did both teachers and therapists.

Another study carried out within a population of emotionally disturbed and learning-disabled young adolescents (Kayser-Boyd, Adelman & Taylor, 1985) concluded that these students were able to identify both the risks and benefits of professional counselling. Identified risks were linked with self-disclosure (23%); discomfort with the professional helper (15%); violation of confidence (13%); and a perception of poor therapeutic effectiveness. Offsetting these views, commonly identified benefits included opportunities to solve problems (39%); having someone to talk to (27%); and learning new things (13%). These findings probably go some way towards explaining why 40 out of the 62 students sampled also indicated some willingness to take part in further counselling.

Changing negative perceptions of counselling in this segment of the school population may not be an easy undertaking however, according to an interview study of 32 young adolescents in special education settings, which was carried out by the same research team (Taylor, Adelman, & Kayser-Boyd, 1985). From this investigation, the researchers noted that reluctance and dissatisfaction were encountered at various stages

of the helping interview amongst 79% of their sample. These students gave various reasons for holding an adverse opinion. Some of these reasons related to aspects of the counselling process, such as being asked too many questions, feeling pressured, or causing more problems. Other reasons given by the students related to aspects of themselves, for example having no personal problems or feeling no need of professional help. Further justification referred to the way in which the counselling process was presented, such as having little choice in attending, being coerced into coming, or being faced with sanctions for not showing up. These features may be more commonly encountered in school-based referrals because, in the author's experience, they can carry disciplinary overtones.

In working with under-achieving students, Mills (1985) found that they identified hobbies as the best topic to talk about, followed by relationships with others, while the worst topic of conversation involved discussion of unhappy times which students had experienced. Noting that underachievers have more difficulty with expressing themselves, Mills also observed that her students disclosed more information where self-disclosure had been modelled.

In parallel with the work carried out by other researchers in this area, Friedman, Glickman & Kovach (1986) surveyed another adolescent group from a special population. These workers drew upon the experiences of 482 sixteen year-olds participants in 30 outpatient and 27 residential drug-treatment programmes, comparing their views with those of the project staff involved. Generally speaking, female adolescents rated the treatment programmes which they had participated in more positively than did their male counterparts. However, a more intriguing outcome in light

of expected differences between adult and adolescent perceptions, was that both clients and staff rated residential programmes more highly, apparently because of a perception of extra personal support, increased levels of concern, and greater encouragement of the client's expression of negative feelings.

### Adolescent Termination of Contact

Two investigations outside of the school setting have suggested that technical attributes of the session set-up can influence the way in which professional helping is perceived by adolescent consumers. For example, the majority of English adolescents interviewed by Stuart-Smith (1994) while indicating that they had benefitted from therapy in an adolescent unit, objected to the use that had been made of a one-way mirror and video equipment. A similar finding, from the Texas study of Newfield, Joanning, Kuehl & Quinn (1991) was that their teenage clients particularly disliked the use of video cameras to record the sessions. This sample of young people reported feeling scared during initial sessions, and the researchers observed that common adolescent tactics were to listen carefully in the early phase of professional contact, and to gather information on their parent's position which was later actively employed between sessions in attempts to obstruct further family participation. These Texan adolescents unanimously reported themselves as being against therapy carried out in a family context

A study of the premature termination of contact in an Irish high-school context (O'Leary, 1979) also reminds us that adolescents should not be thought of as a homogenous group. O'Leary tracked and interviewed 123 fifteen to nineteen year-old

students over a one-year period, which is a much longer period of association between investigator and client group than is found in most studies. Although, from a student perspective, helper empathy emerged as an important parameter, another critical outcome was that 45% of the students chose to terminate contact with their counsellor as early as the second counselling session. Consequently, it would seem that that some variability of response may be expected amongst adolescent consumers. O'Leary also compared terminating students with those who continued in counselling, and concluded that terminators were those who had negative attitudes towards people in general, as well as towards counselling, and were unable to accept help from either formal or informal sources. However this analysis provided no data on patterns of informal helping, and it left unanswered the question of what adolescent reasoning produced an early termination decision.

Suzuki (1989) examined records at the Tavistock Clinic in London, to determine rates of premature termination in a sample of 105 clients, of between fourteen and twenty-two years of age. Approximately 25% dropped out at the assessment-interview stage, and 20% made a unilateral decision to terminate contact. Almost half the sample (49%) dropped out of treatment prior to session 12 of their counselling programme. From this data, Suzuki drew a parallel with drop-out rates in adult clients, who were reported by Garfield (1978) as engaging in a median number of of between five and six counselling sessions.

Perhaps feedback on the extent to which students terminate counselling prematurely may offer an indirect index of their satisfaction with counselling, and four investigations bear upon this issue. While Vial-Val, Rosenthal, Curtiss & Marohn (1984)



reported that 73% of 102 fifteen year-olds terminated unilaterally before session 17, termination of contact was undertaken as early as session two by 45% of the sample studied by O'Leary (1979). As many as 65% of the students surveyed by Morey et al (1989) dropped out after either one or two sessions. Accordingly, the issue of how to attract students to helping services and maintain their commitment appears to be an important one.

### Adolescent Avoidance of Help

Although there are a number of reports of positive adolescent perceptions of adult assistance, numerous individuals terminate contact prematurely, and other teenagers do not even seek help. In Suzuki's (1989) study, for instance, 17% of the adolescent clients failed to show up for their first appointment. Attention must therefore be given to hypotheses which seek to explain their avoidance of helping interventions.

In addressing factors which may prevent or disturb contact with professional helpers West, Kayser, Overton & Saltmarsh (1991) indicate that adolescent preparation and orientation may be important. From a survey of 235 students attending Illinois high schools, these writers suggested that students who are unprepared for adult support, or who have negative attitudes towards it, may be unaware of the objectives and benefits involved. Potential clients, they point out, are unlikely to seek help unless these deficits and apprehensions are resolved. It was also noted that the strongest student responses reflected widespread concern about possible disclosure of personal information.

The importance of this issue is reinforced by McGuire, Parnell, Blau & Abbott (1994) who surveyed 30 secondary students engaged in a central Florida drug and alcohol treatment programme. These authors reported that adolescent opinion favoured more confidentiality than they expected to receive. Similarly, Remley and Albright's (1988) interview study carried out in a small adolescent sample across Virginia, Maryland, & Washington D.C. concluded that not only were students confused about their counsellor's purpose, but that they did not feel that interviews would be kept confidential.

Eisenberg (1983) concluded that there were numerous indications in the literature that adolescents, like adults, are reluctant to seek help. For example, Nadler & Porat (1978) found that when adolescents' identity was known, they were unlikely to ask for assistance even on a straightforward general knowledge task. This finding is likely to have implications for U.K. schools, since student identity and attendance are individually registered, and the latter parameter is monitored twice a day. Walster et al (1978) also found that adolescents tended to avoid adult help where a peer-support option was available.

In addition, Barnett et al (1988) ascertained that adolescents were able to offer numerous reasons for not wanting help, and Johnson et al (1986) have pointed out that only rarely do adolescents request treatment. Moreover, this is an observation which has been found to be applicable even when young people have been distressed (Adelman et al, 1993; Whittaker et al 1990). Eisenberg's explanation for the finding of reluctance in this age-group is that adolescents may be more sensitive than adults to help which

implies dependent or incompetent behaviour, or that creates an unwanted sense of indebtedness on their part.

Acceptability of help may also be related to professional views of adolescents, for example, Jones and Nisbett (1971) have asserted that professional helpers often perceive adolescent problems to derive largely from individual personality characteristics. Medway (1979) has also suggested that pupil's problems are believed by teachers to be produced by factors residing within the student, rather than by variables in the environment. Adelman & Taylor (1986) cite 10 studies supporting the view that psychology and education professionals mistrust client explanations and decisions. Melton, Cooper & Saks (1983) have also argued that professionals often believe minors lack the competence to make informed judgements in their own best interests. These findings suggest the possibility that communication of negative helper attitudes may influence adolescent decisions to avoid getting help in school.

It has been suggested that reluctance is related to a lack of confidence in the treatment process (Baumrind, 1978). Reluctance is also held to be a reaction against authority (Miller & Burt, 1982). The psychoanalytic explanation is that reluctance to engage in treatment constitutes a defensive reaction against facing up to personal problems (Amanant, 1979; Kaplan, 1980; Wachtel, 1982). Reluctance may also be related to a finding of Simoni et al (1991) that students expect professionals to offer a predominantly intellectual form of help based upon an evaluation of adolescent thinking.

Despite the variety of these suggestions, Adelman & Taylor, (op.cit) argue that they share the characteristic of professional workers ignoring the possibility that a young

person's reluctance may be appropriate to negative features of the intervention. Notably, some studies suggest that progress is poorer when participation has not been voluntary (Kopel & Arkowitz, 1975; Wilson, 1979). Adelman & Taylor also point out that intervention for minors is frequently mandated by adults. Indeed, 30% of their adolescent sample indicated that they had been given no choice, and a further 21% reported negative perceptions of professional intervention. These included being asked too many questions, feeling pressured, and believing that receiving help might cause them more problems.

Adelman & Taylor (1986) assert that the reluctance of a significant number of minors is not inappropriately motivated, and need not imply underlying pathology or skill deficiencies. These authors also go on to argue that although actions designed to avoid treatment may appear deviant, that is not a sufficient basis for diagnoses of emotional disturbance, learned helplessness, or learning difficulties, nor for prescriptive treatment interventions. They accordingly suggest that adolescent avoidance behaviours may not be evidence of irrationality, a valid symptom of pathology or skill deficiency, or inappropriate motivation. It was concluded that concepts about reluctance which emphasise only the deficiencies of children have severely restricted the focus of research, since minors are not a homogenous group.

Finally, Eisenberg (1983) asserts that children, like adults, frequently respond negatively to aid from others, and remain reluctant to seek help. Compared to younger children, the adolescent age-group, it is suggested, becomes more sensitive to help that implies dependent or incompetent behaviour on their part, and to help which creates an unwarranted sense of indebtedness towards the helping agent.

### The Threat to Self-Esteem Model.

Fisher, Nadler & De Paulo (1983) concluded, after reviewing the few published reports deriving from an experimental paradigm, that adolescents sometimes perceive help-seeking as an admission of inadequacy. Thus it was hypothesised that they may avoid help-seeking behaviour as long as others are likely to know about it. However, these authors also suggested that in some circumstances it is easier for teenagers to seek help when they believe that they are not themselves responsible for their state of need. Fisher, Nadler, & Witcher-Alagna (1983) advanced the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis as the most comprehensive and parsimonious model in accounting for findings of this type. According to this hypothesis, adolescents may perceive some helping interventions as undermining their feelings of personal competence. Of course, one necessary assumption must be that they have some self-esteem to be threatened in the first place.

According to Fisher (1983) the threat-to-self-esteem (TTSE) model has been advanced as an alternative to equity, reactance, and attribution models of explaining why recipients sometimes have negative reactions to aid. The equity model (Adams, 1963; Greenberg & Westcott, 1983) is based upon the notion that equity is an important social norm in human relationships, and that inequitable relationships generate distress. It suggests that negative reactions arise from the perception that one person in a relationship has a more beneficial ratio of outcomes to inputs than the other. Inequity is held to occur in helping situations because recipients gain resources without having to give anything in return, and it has been suggested that the amount of distress

experienced is related to the magnitude of the perceived inequity. Receiving assistance that cannot be returned contradicts the social convention of equitable exchanges and may thereby lower the self-esteem of the individual seeking help.

Reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981) derives from the view that people want maximum freedom of choice, and proposes that persons perceiving that help reduces their freedom can experience a negative emotional state. Reactance is hypothesised as being most probable where helping interactions limit important areas of individual freedom and such limitations may also be expected to exercise an adverse effect upon self-esteem.

Kelly's (1967) attribution model asserts that people react more appropriately to help when they make positive attributions regarding the motivation of the donor. In helping situations, attributions are developed which attempt to explain the behaviour of the helper. Help associated with internal attributions for failure is likely to be regarded as unpleasant, precipitates negative self and donor evaluations, also diminishes help-seeking. This type of interaction may also attenuate the level of self-esteem previously experienced by the person seeking help.

These three models display some theoretical shortcomings, which include the following. Equity theory has been inadequate for making predictions in certain contexts because some variables arouse feelings that can be difficult to classify on an equity-inequity dimension. Reactance theory implies nothing about reactions to non-restrictive help, and although Attribution theory sets criteria for making attributions which are

gathered over several behavioural episodes, attributions frequently occur during the first help-seeking episode (Fisher et al, op.cit.).

Moreover, although these three models may be useful in explaining certain reactions of adults to assistance from others, there may be some limitations on how far they can be applied in secondary school settings. In the case of the equity model, inequity seems to be implicit in the status differential between students and teachers, which represents a common social norm for secondary schools. Hence student expectations for teacher assistance may be based upon past experience of inequity and therefore may not contradict social convention within a school setting. As far as reactance is concerned, a similar argument could apply. An outstanding feature of the organisation of the school day is that it reduces individual student freedom as a matter of course, so that maximum personal freedom is not the norm during school hours. Since secondary students have accumulated years of exposure to limited freedom in school, it may be hypothesised that they could habituate to limited freedom to the extent that the probability of reactance phenomena may be reduced. From the perspective of the attribution model, it appears that altruistic intent is generally not attributed to those who provide help because they are paid to do so. Since adolescents are commonly aware that their teachers are paid professionals, it may be argued that their attributions may be influenced accordingly.

In contrast to the above alternatives, the TTSE model assumes that external aid may contain a mixture of self-supporting elements (e.g. practical value, evidence of caring and concern) as well as self-threatening ones (e.g. evidence of failure, inferiority, and dependency). To the extent that it is self-threatening, unfavourable donor and aid evaluations can be generated (Fisher, 1983). Unlike the other models, the TTSE

approach explicitly assumes that self-related consequences of aid are critical in determining recipient reactions, and posits that negative-defensive reactions cluster together, as do non-defensive ones (Fisher et al 1983). Nadler (1987) also asserts that help-seeking can be a self-threatening experience for individuals in need since it is tantamount to an admission of failure and inadequacy, because of which they may choose not to seek help even if this decision means continued difficulties. The attraction of TTSE theory rests in the proposal that self-consequences are inherent to a broad range of helping situations due to aspects of socialisation and the qualities of the help itself, whereas the other explanatory models omit a large section of aid situations from their domain of investigation (Fisher et al, op.cit.).

In proposing a developmental variant of the TTSE model, Shell & Eisenberg (1992) suggest that adolescents with higher levels of self-esteem may be more sensitive to threat because they gain more from a consistent image of being competent. For them, help may be threatening because it implies an inferiority-superiority relationship between recipient and donor and conflicts with values of self-reliance and independence (Fisher et al, op.cit.). Moreover, elements of inferiority and dependency associated with the seeking of help are more inconsistent with the positive self-recognitions of higher rather than lower self-esteem individuals (Nadler, 1987).

In the opinion of Shell & Eisenberg, teenage interpretations of threat versus support may depend not only upon whether the help implies incompetence on their part, but also on whether this help implies respect and liking rather than disrespect and contempt. Moreover, receiving help may run counter to western cultural values based upon self-reliance. Notwithstanding the above, these authors go on to point out that



although individuals may view the receipt of aid as threatening to their self-esteem, they may nonetheless respond in such a way that their self-esteem is not diminished.

### Self-Esteem Issues.

In the view of Rosenberg (1985) self-esteem refers to a feeling of being satisfied with oneself, of believing that one is a person of worth. Coopersmith (1967) has asserted that it is not only possible to derive global estimates of self-esteem, but also that such estimates have been found to remain stable over a 3-year period. Global self-esteem is thought to be based upon the individual's evaluation of all parts of himself (Pope, McHale & Craighead, 1988). In educational settings, Harter (1992) has suggested that there is a significant relationship between student self-esteem and perceived teacher support. Perhaps, as Bowlby (1973) has proposed, a perception that others can be relied upon boosts the ability to perform in a self-reliant and confident manner. Therefore the individual's level of self-esteem when seeking support may depend upon how they perceive a helping interaction.

It remains to be determined whether threat-to-self-esteem is an across-the-board effect. Moreover, a persistent problem in applying the threat-to-self-esteem model is that available research does not involve comprehensive studies of adolescent populations. At the time of writing, on-line searches indicate that much of the research favouring the TTSE hypothesis appears to involve samples of undergraduate students. Consequently, it seems that secondary-school students appear to be under-represented in this segment of the literature.

A rare exception to the omission of TTSE research with adolescents is provided by Nadler (1987). In a study of 128 sixteen to eighteen year-old high school students, as predicted, individuals with high self-esteem tended to seek less help under self-threatening conditions. However, this happened when working on a difficult anagram task, while students were misled as to the existence of a partner in an adjoining room, so that the results were not derived from a real-world context. Moreover, Nadler (1986) points out that TTSE research tasks are founded upon relatively narrow and artificial helping encounters, and that laboratory-based TTSE research possesses an unknown degree of external validity. The relevance of the TTSE hypothesis for applied settings involving adolescents therefore appears to be largely unknown .

### Synopsis of Research on Views of Help Received.

#### Studies on The Influence of Student Perception

From the evidence reviewed above, most studies suggest the majority of students report that they derived benefit from professional support and were satisfied with the level of service received. From a consumer perspective the issues of significance are quite different from those of counsellors, researchers, or observers, with an emphasis on quality of relationship rather than upon technical virtuosity or theoretical purity. While this body of research, like any other, is subject to certain methodological limitations,

what remains impressive are findings re-stating the importance of client perception in the counselling process. Indeed, there is little to suggest that Gurman's (1977) conclusion that client perception is a powerful concomitant of change needs to be altered, regardless of the theoretical background of the counsellor.

### Studies on The Influence of Student Preferences

From the available research, which is based almost entirely upon survey techniques, some promising hints on the preferences of secondary school students emerge. These include a leaning towards helpers who work a lot with students (Wiggins & Moody, 1987) who are available, reliable & supportive (De Weerd, 1986) who focus warmly on the students' needs from the start, and encourage individual autonomy (Taylor et al, 1986) and who cover the issues in not more than five sessions (Wiggins & Moody, op. cit.).

While four of the above studies highlight counsellors as favoured consultants in times of trouble (Gray, 1980; Murray et al 1983; Sproles, 1988; & Lehmanowsky, 1991), three nominate teachers, ( Gray, 1980; De Weerd, 1986; & Sproles, 1988) and two also cite parents, (Gray, 1980; Sproles, 1988) as adolescent-approved sources of help. Evidence on problems covered is very sparse from this area of research, but educational problems, social relationship issues, and alcohol or drug-related concerns accounted for 65%, 52% & just over 20% of the problem total in the single study that was found to provide this type of information (Morey et al 1989).

### Studies on The Influence of Student Age

Age has emerged as a significant variable in four retrospective studies of adolescent's opinions of counselling. Students in their second year of secondary education tended to make more frequent use of counselling services (Morey et al 1989) while Sinha (1972) found lower disclosure levels in 15-16 year olds than in peers two or three years younger. Northman (1985) noted that as students got older, they appeared to become more aware of the potential usefulness of help from others. In an earlier investigation, Northman (1978) had also observed that high-school students preferred helpers who were either of their own age, or a few years older.

### Studies on The Influence of Student Gender

Following counsellor intervention, females have been shown as more likely to say that they would seek help (De Paulo (1978c). In the study conducted by Newport (1976) three times more female students than male students stated that they had made contact with a school counsellor. A higher frequency of female referral may be a relatively stable gender difference, since female students also report making more use of peer counsellors (Morey et al, 1989). Females also perceive counsellors as being more useful (Northman, 1985); engage in greater self-disclosure in all-female counselling groups (Kraft & Vraa, 1975); and rate residential drug-treatment programmes more positively (Friedman et al 1986).

Female students were not the predominant group without exception, however. In the Newport (op.cit.) study, males formed the largest proportion in one category of respondents. Here, teachers initiated mandatory referral to counsellors for 22% of male students (which was double the level for females) 44% of whom felt that the outcome had been purely disciplinary. In another variation of the reported gender findings, De Paulo (1978) indicated that high-school students also seem to prefer female helpers in situations which they consider serious. As far as adolescent levels of satisfaction are concerned however, neither gender nor age variables were found to exercise any significant effect in the study of Morey et al, (1989).

#### Studies on The Influence of Student Culture

Cultural influences received attention in three of the above investigations. Dutch secondary students, against the overall trend for this group of post-helping studies, demonstrated favourable attitudes towards counselling for personal problems (De Weerd, 1986). Similarly, 50% of the Austrian adolescents in Seifert's (1985) survey indicated a need for increased counselling on personal concerns. In relation to student satisfaction data however, Engen, Laing & Sawyer (1988) reported that culture exercised no significant effects.

## Conclusion

It would clearly be inaccurate to regard adolescence as a phase of human development devoid of demands upon and challenges to the individual's resources. It is therefore understandable that young people commonly seek support from others, and that they sometimes request professional help. Nonetheless, while some compensation may be found in more frequent adolescent support-seeking for educational or career issues, the relatively low take-up rates for help with personal problems may be disappointing for teachers and school counsellors.

It seems possible that informal relationships in school may offer students sufficient support for low-level difficulties to render requests for teacher assistance unnecessary. Perhaps the low rates of seeking support for personal problems may also appear more understandable when viewed in the context of a developmental period which does not generally favour contact with professionals. From such little data as there is available, it seems likely that around one in five adolescents may experience problems acute enough to seek the assistance of a professional helper in school. However, a current constraint is that it remains unclear how far this estimate applies to students in English secondary schools.

## **Summary Of Methodological Limitations in The Research Literature**

### Introduction

Even a brief reading of the literature indicates that investigation of the problems and perceptions of secondary-age children represents an area of growing research interest. This may create an impression that by now a great deal is known about relevant adolescent experience, and that such knowledge is securely founded. However, a detailed inspection of published research reports suggests that this may not entirely be the case. Indeed, there are a number of methodological short-comings in the literature, and these will be considered in the discussion which follows. The significant variables include the geographical location of the studies reviewed, the age range of the students, the size of the sample, the research technique, and the data-analysis procedures, together with the sampling and procedural problems.

### Limitations in Location

A striking aspect of this review of primary studies of adolescent problems, perspectives, and the provision of school-based helping, is that it reveals an uneven geographical distribution of research effort. With one area of exception, 63% of all the studies reviewed were carried out on the North American continent. Indeed, the vast majority of this research was completed in the United States. (The exceptional study area was that of educational research into adolescent problems, in which only 20% of the research was

of American origin.) The predominance of work completed by American researchers upon American samples opens up the possibility that American cultural values may introduce an element of bias in the overall pattern of findings.

#### Limitations in Age Distribution

The age-range of the young people involved varies considerably from one investigation to another, ranging from four to twenty years. Pre-adolescent children were included in 35% of the studies reported, and samples consisting solely of young adolescents (those of 13-15 years of age) accounted for 23% of the reports. At the other end of the age-range, just 7% of the researchers worked only with older adolescents (those of 16 or more years of age). In contrast, 70% of the studies showed that both younger and older adolescents had been embraced by their samples, so that a clear preference emerged for working with a wide age-range of students. However, the frequent inclusion of younger children implies that results reported may be considerably influenced by the perceptions and needs of relatively young respondents.

#### Limitations in Sample Size

The differences in sample size range from 24 to 5108 individuals, so that sample-sizes varied by a factor of more than 1500, which represents a great deal of variation. To categorise them by size, a four-level coding of the sample-size was set up, as described overleaf:-



1. Very Large Sample (VLS) 1,000 or more individuals.
2. Large Sample (LS) 500 - 999 individuals.
3. Moderate Sample (MS) 200 - 499 individuals.
4. Small Sample (SS) 10 - 199 individuals.

Of the investigations reviewed, 22% were VLS studies, 17% were LS studies, 35% were MS and 27% were SS studies. Therefore, by the above criteria, there was considerable variation in sample size. The VLS and LS studies accounted for 39% of the total, and MS and SS studies for 62%, indicating a tendency to favour the more modest sample sizes. (The fact that the above percentages total 101% is accounted for by the process of rounding up to whole numbers.)

#### Limitations in Research Technique

This body of research included the use of questionnaires (45% of the studies); rating scales (33% of the studies); and interviews (18% of the studies). Three authors indicated using checklists or an inventory without providing a clear description of the materials involved. Adding to the lack of precision, research instruments described as questionnaires often turned out to be rating scales when accounts of the procedure were closely inspected. Accordingly, the use of pencil and paper surveys appeared to be by far the most popular mode of research within adolescent samples. There was very little experimental work reported, and the use of innovative techniques was rare, although the

random-interval activity sampling of Raffaelli & Duckett (1989) forms a notable exception.

### Limitations in Data Analysis

Further diversity was encountered when methods of data-analysis were examined. Although a total of 28 different approaches to analysing adolescent research data was encountered, the ten most frequently employed means of processing research results were easy to identify. The most popular approaches included the use of frequency tabulations (used in 27% of the reports) and analysis of variance (used in 23%). These were followed followed by percentage tabulations (21%); chi-square (19%); manova or t-tests (13%); factor analysis (12%); descriptive statistics (8%); product-moment correlations (8%); and analysis of covariance (6%). Further one-off applications appeared in 10% of the research reports. A common strategy appeared to be that of presenting simple tabulations, supplemented by some more detailed form of analysis. The more outstanding examples of statistical sophistication were provided by Arnold et al (1988) with a combination of Anova, Manova, and Tukey's method; Berndt (1979) who used Anova, Ancova and factor analysis; Boldero & Fallon (1995) who adopted frequency tabulations, Anova, and hierarchical loglinear analysis; and notably Windle (1994) who used a combination of Manova, multiple regression, factor analysis, and Cochran's test.

The best overall example of consistency was that 41% of the questionnaire studies employed frequency tabulations. However, no one method of data analysis was

common to all studies of a given type, and although most researchers had applied more than one statistical method, there was little agreement on which set of procedures to employ even within studies of the same type. Taking questionnaire studies (the most frequent type of research) as an example, of those employing frequency tabulations, additional analyses included chi-square (24%); t-tests (18%); and a range of other options (such as Anova, Ancova, correlations, Mann-Whitney U, or Newman-Keuls test) on a single study basis. An additional 20% of the questionnaire studies did not go beyond the frequency tabulation stage. Accordingly, there appeared to be little agreement as to the most appropriate way to analyse the data collected, and a general lack of comprehensive data analysis strategies.

#### Limitations in Sampling and Procedure

Amongst the studies reviewed, 38% of the samples were restricted, unrepresentative, unbalanced, or poorly described. Moreover, only 26% of the authors reported that they had employed some process of randomisation in setting up their research sample. It may be that more had done so in practice, but if so, in writing up the research they omitted to record their action. Similarly, just 10% of the authors recorded that they had advised their sample that their responses would be kept anonymous, and a mere 4% noted that the administration of research instruments had been carefully controlled. This characteristic of the reports is a matter of some importance, because perhaps the most consistent feature of this body of research was a lack of concern over the readability of the material presented to the students. Given that adolescent samples are likely to

contain a proportion of students with reading disabilities, this must be regarded as a significant omission, since most of the studies were carried out within school settings.

However, there are further limitations to be considered. An item of equal importance is that the quality of information provided for other researchers was often less than satisfactory. In 36% of the studies reviewed, researchers failed to describe the procedure at a level of detail which would enable other workers to judge whether they could repeat the study. In 10% of the reports, the experimental protocol appeared to have been compromised by the adoption of differential information-gathering procedures across groups, for example in variations of approach or time-scale. Finally, 19% of the investigations were single-site studies, carried out with a small school or clinic sample, thereby limiting the extent to which the results could be applied to other settings. The overall impression was that in the majority of cases one or other important aspects of the research lacked careful control. Caution should therefore be exercised in interpreting or generalising the results reported.

## Directions For The Present Research

### Rationale

There is an outstanding need for research which is carried out with English secondary school students. Several reasons can be presented to sustain this assertion:-

1. Most of the research discussed in the foregoing review has been carried out in other countries, with unknown validity for English adolescents. One distinctive difference is that the English school system, unlike its North American counterpart, does not normally employ counsellors. Consequently, help for students with personal problems is usually delivered by teachers, with little investigation of the effects registered by adolescent recipients.
2. Eight U.K. surveys of adolescent opinion preceded the introduction of the National Curriculum (National Curriculum Council, 1988) in September 1989. These studies included that work of Arnold et al (1988); Branwhite (1988); Hooper (1978); Murgatroyd (1977); Porteous (1985); Porteous & Kelleher (1987); and Siann et al (1982).
3. Three of the U.K. studies (Hendry et al, 1992; Porteous & Kelleher, 1987; Siann et al, 1982) were carried out in Irish or Scottish school systems, which have a different organisational basis, and the latter study was based upon student ratings of hypothetical situations.

4. Six U.K. studies addressed issues other than personal problems and support in school. Careers issues were investigated by Arnold et al (1988) and Cherry & Gear (1987). Branwhite (1988) examined students' incentive preferences, and Keys and Fernandes (1992) conducted a global survey of students' thoughts about school. Personal concerns reaching beyond the context of school were explored in the work of Porteous (1985) while Branwhite (1994) carried out a survey of students' life-events.

5. Although Murgatroyd (1977) and Hooper (1978) have looked into students' perceptions of help provided in English schools, the fieldwork for these studies was done almost two decades ago, and represents a small-scale, single-site research paradigm.

6. It also appears that the U.K. research on school-based helping has not systematically examined process variables from an adolescent viewpoint. Nor is it immune to the general criticism about overlooking the readability of research instruments which was recorded earlier.

7. Although the threat-to-self-esteem (TTSE) hypothesis has been repeatedly tested with adults, very little appropriate work has been done with adolescents, even in a laboratory setting. Moreover, there is still a need to test the validity of the TTSE hypothesis amongst adolescents in a real-life setting. The main reason for exercising this option is that theoretical speculation about adolescents in real-world contexts currently lacks direct empirical support.

## Main Research Questions

Given the dearth of contemporary knowledge regarding English adolescents' views on the helping process, there is a need for a context-sensitive and up-to-date investigation. From the standpoint of the present enquiry, five research questions have particular relevance. These are:-

1. How do adolescents view their own approach to solving personal problems?
2. How do adolescents perceive the helping resources of their school?
3. What are adolescents' preferences in helping situations?
4. What is the adolescent's experience of getting help in school?
5. To what extent is the receipt of help a threat to adolescent self-esteem?

Clearly, each these questions are important, and responses to all five can throw light upon adolescent experience prior to, during, or after initiation of the helping process. Information of this kind may not only fill some gaps in previous research, but may also help to inform professional practice. The five main questions above are therefore the focus of this thesis, the target group being young to mid-adolescents in full-time secondary education.

## Overview of The Planned Research

To overcome some of the weaknesses in methodology identified in the literature review, the research plan sets out to include the following features:-

- A multiple-site investigation in English schools.
- A large-scale sample of students of differing ages.
- Stratified random sampling.
- Equal numbers of male and female students.
- Phenomenological and experimental methodology.
- A range of statistical techniques.
- Student-derived questionnaire content.
- Controlled readability instrumentation.
- Controlled questionnaire administration.
- Anonymity of student responding.
- Time-scaled interventions.

The means by which the above features were incorporated into the fieldwork will be described at appropriate points in the methodology chapter that follows.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

“Surveys are well suited to descriptive studies where the interest is, say, in how many people in a given population possess a particular attribute, opinion, or whatever.... The quasi-experimental approach attempts to liberalise the experiment to cope more realistically with conditions outside the laboratory. It shares the same notions about the nature of scientific activity as true experimentation.” (Robson, 1993: 47 & 49.)

## **Introduction**

This chapter is presented in three parts, labelled Part A, Part B, and Part C. The first two parts cover the survey phase of the research. Part A deals with survey design, while Part B deals with the survey implementation. Part C, the final part of this chapter, describes the experimental phase of the research.

### **Part A: Survey Development Methodology**

#### Questionnaire Survey Rationale

Survey technology is built upon the simple premise that if one wishes to know what people think, then an obvious strategy is to ask them (Weisberg & Bower, 1977). Indeed, asking people what they think in a survey is an extension of normal human communication. Surveys can handle research questions focusing on the process, timing, location, frequency, and quality of human interaction. Robson (1993) also comments that surveys (unlike experimental or quasi-experimental investigation) can accommodate questions that do not require control over the events being looked into. Perhaps with the single exception of the telephone survey, survey-by-questionnaire offers the researcher a mode of conducting fieldwork which is more efficient (particularly regarding professional time and cost-effectiveness) than the alternative techniques of individual interview or

case-study. Accordingly, questionnaire studies have become one of the common tools of social enquiry.

There is now an extensive range of publications demonstrating how popular the use of questionnaires has become as a research tool with potentially broad application. To provide only a hint of the diversity of recent studies, questionnaires have proved valuable for investigating conflict in decision-making (Dalton & Cosier, 1989); grief experience (Barrett & Scott, 1989); evaluation of pain (Chen & Treed, 1985); alcohol dependency (Potamianos, Gorman, Duffy, & Peters; 1984); health status (Segovia, Bartlett, & Edwards; 1989); hypnotic experience (Matheson, Shue, & Bart; 1989); and urban survival skills (Giller, Dial & Chan; 1986).

Oppenheim (1966) suggests that one major function of the questionnaire from a research point of view is that of measurement. The specific parameters involved derive from the individual researcher's specification of the main variables to be measured. Oppenheim also cautions that it is important to access opinions of the group being surveyed with a minimum of distortion, otherwise it is possible to end up with opinions derived from a source (including investigator bias) other than that of the respondent's own value-system. Moreover, this author comments that research attempts to sample a particular universe of content in the respondent's mind. In doing so, it does not set out to obtain the whole of this universe of content, but only enough of it to enable the researcher to outline its salient features, i.e. those features which pertain to the purpose of the enquiry at hand.

## Questionnaire Design Parameters

### Theoretical Considerations

From the angle of how usable a research tool the questionnaire might be, Hoinville & Jowell (1978) advise that questionnaires should be easy to administer. They add that the construction process should assist in both the editing and the coding of responses. These writers also underline the need to make the content of questionnaires user-friendly. This important end can be served, they suggest, by designing questions which are both easy to understand, and easy to answer accurately and clearly. In particular, any filter questions (those questions which apply only to sub-groups incorporated within the sample) should be easy for respondents to identify. The same authors also highlight the need to minimise potential memory problems for respondents. This point is also addressed by Oppenheim (1966) who asserts that respondents should not be expected to keep too much information in mind. In accord with this view, Oppenheim proposes that individual questions should be kept short, and not exceed a length of twenty words.

On the point of minimising memory problems, one general principle to observe in designing questionnaires is that of promoting the use of recognition memory over recall

memory. The main reason for this is that undue reliance on the latter would predictably generate increased cognitive strain for the respondent. Indeed, one advantage of questionnaires designed in either multiple choice or closed question formats would be that they provide respondents with numerous cues. In doing so, they increase the probability of recourse to recognition memory, easing the information-processing demands placed upon the respondent.

Concern for the well-being of respondents is extended by the general suggestion that it is important to promote a feeling that respondents are being treated with respect (Oppenheim *op.cit.*). More specifically, he advises that questions should be amenable to completion in as short a time as possible, and with relatively little effort. Similarly, it is suggested that the amount of writing required should be reduced as far as possible, and, consistent with that end, that the design should include a minimum of open-ended questions, since these demand more in the way of creative writing.

Further support can be built into a questionnaire design by the choice of a consistent method of response across items (for instance by requesting that respondents circle their preferred opinions throughout the instruments employed). Hoinville and Jowell (1978) suggest that consistency of responding may also be enhanced by helping the respondent to predict how they should handle a given item. This goal, they point out, can be realised through the use of systematic numbering, by colour coding, and by appropriate juxtaposition of different letter sizes, type-faces, headings, lines, and boxes.

Attention to such details in the presentation of a questionnaire has important implications for the quality of responding subsequently found in the research sample.

In further consideration of respondents' psychological comfort, Oppenheim (1966) recommends that questions in which personal classification (e.g. age & sex) are required should be placed at the end of a questionnaire, unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. Perhaps this constitutes good advice for researching the views of adult samples, however it may be of questionable validity for investigators working with school-age children, where there is indeed good reason to do otherwise. Here it should be born in mind that the school system trains pupils to annotate books and assignments with some form of personal classification placed prominently at the start. The same general rule holds true for test sheets and examination papers, so that to require otherwise in a research questionnaire might be to violate a common and frequently fulfilled expectation for secondary students.

Robson (1993) indicates that the best quality of answers is likely to be gained from specific questions about important things. Wiesberg and Bowen (1978) add that questions should be worded simply, because questions which are phrased in terms that are too sophisticated for the target group of respondents are likely to be unproductive in applied research. Indeed, these workers suggest that questions should be phrased so that they are tailored specifically for the target group of respondents. Hoinville & Jowell (op.cit.) astutely observe that sample members have typically received less education than questionnaires designers, and therefore suggest that care should be taken to ensure

that questions are designed to be comprehensible to all concerned. In this context, they advise that pejorative terms should be eliminated, as should leading questions, each of which may bias the survey results.

Oppenheim (1966) remarks that vague questions should also be avoided, (since they are likely to lead to meaningless responses) as should questions that have no direct bearing on the problems being addressed (since these tend to encourage irrelevant responding). He likewise suggests that double-barrelled questions should be omitted, because they often produce answers in which the meaning is ambivalent. This same writer adds that questions which convey that the respondent is attributed low prestige, or is somehow the subject of social disapproval, remain equally undesirable from the point of view of effective questionnaire design.

Johnson (1978) also offers practical advice regarding the design of survey questions. Writing on the measurement of opinion in educational settings, his suggestions include those of wording questions so as to elicit the same interpretation from every respondent; of using simple, familiar language; of avoiding offensive questions; and of eliminating questions that suggest a socially desirable response. He goes on to add that only one issue should be addressed per question, and that any confusion of cognitive and affective items should be excluded.

## Constraints on Questionnaire Design

While in combination the foregoing advice offers potential for enhancing questionnaire design, this does not amount to absolute control however, or to generating precision in terms of outcomes. Some recent studies suggest that caution is desirable when considering either the advice or the strictures offered by contemporary writers. For example, Boser (1979) found that response-rates in her sample remained unaffected by variations in design which included changes to the type-face or packaging of pages in a multi-page questionnaire. Similarly, Fernando (1989) has reported that in working with high-school students, although certain design recommendations could be adopted with confidence, other aspects of questionnaire designs appeared to be less commonly accepted. Fernando's wariness is reflected in another study, conducted by Boser & Clark (1990). These researchers had recommendations from the scientific literature separately evaluated, firstly by a group of experts on question design, and secondly by an independent validation panel. Although levels of support for most items were high, (above 80%) support varied between the expert group and the validation panel. Accordingly, the authors of this study concluded that questionnaire design may be a science up to a certain point, but beyond that it is an art.



## Questionnaire Administration

### Piloting Procedure

While it may appear to be a relatively simple process to formulate a questionnaire and then use it to gather data from a substantive number of respondents, in practice it seems inadvisable to move immediately from one stage into the other. There are several reasons why rapid implementation may be risky, but perhaps the major one is that there is no guarantee that the world-view of the researcher and that of the respondents will be equivalent. Indeed, differences in social and educational experience would in all probability render such an outcome unlikely. Therefore the prudent researcher would plan intermediate stages to reduce any difference between his or her own value-system and that of the respondents, at least as far as the topics covered by the questionnaire are concerned.

At an early stage it can be particularly helpful to review any similar work which has been undertaken by other researchers, in order to gather information on potentially helpful problem-solving strategies. However, while this formative step can prove fruitful, description of work previously undertaken is unlikely to be sufficient in itself, since it does not directly address the needs of an interaction between a new questionnaire and a different sample of respondents. Hence it is generally recommended that each investigator should include a pilot stage in the development of their final questionnaire.

For this purpose It has been suggested (Oppenheim1966) that any development work should be undertaken with a modest-sized group. For example, Hoinville & Jowell (1978) suggest 30-100 individuals whose attributes parallel those of the main sample. At this stage help can be obtained from respondents in achieving an optimum form of wording for questions or directions, and any problems in layout, or particular nuances of meaning or style of responding can be ironed out.

A further potential area for refinement had been suggested by Gaskell, Wright and O'Muirheartaigh (1993) who suggest that the response alternatives included in a questionnaire are not neutral items, in that they convey information which may influence responses to the immediate or later questions. Accordingly, a review of alternatives with a pilot group should prove to be time well spent. Likewise, any redundant or unhelpful questions can be subjected to careful editing. An additional asset of piloting a questionnaire is that sub-sections can be evaluated without going through the whole instrument in a single session. Data can also be gathered on how much time is likely to be required to administer either each section or the complete questionnaire. However, it also seems advisable to administer the full questionnaire, in order to determine whether the complete task is manageable from the point of view of both the researcher and the respondents.

## Question Development

With a school-based survey in mind, a development plan was formulated at the outset, so that the construction of an effective questionnaire could be undertaken in an orderly sequence. This plan incorporated twelve steps deemed necessary for a robust development specification, as outlined below:-

1. Compile a list of research questions deriving from the review of the literature previously carried out.
2. Conduct an item analysis of questionnaires employed in previous school-based surveys involving adolescent students.
3. Assemble a draft questionnaire covering relevant topics derived from both the research questions and the item analysis of previously published material.
4. Consult with a researcher familiar with questionnaire design techniques for a competent evaluation of the draft survey instrument.
5. Revise the overall design and item content of the questionnaire in light of the foregoing evaluation.

6. Consult with an independent statistician for advice regarding coding and data analysis.
  
7. Develop relevant fieldwork materials, including:-
  - 7.1 A letter requesting co-operation from schools.
  - 7.2 OHP acetates for field-testing questionnaire items.
  - 7.3 Modification sheets for recording any suggestions elicited from secondary students.
  
8. Formulate an itinerary of school visits, including school name and address, identity of participating teaching groups, and names of teachers to be consulted. Carry out related visits, and collate the opinions received.
  
9. Re-draft the final questionnaire content and layout to incorporate modifications received from student evaluation.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Minimise any potential investigator influence upon student responding, by formulating materials for teacher administration of the questionnaire.

Include brief background notes for teachers, guidelines for sequencing the administration tasks, and a detailed protocol for systematising the administration process across groups. Also compile introductory material for respondents, aimed at fostering an appropriate cognitive set for completing the questionnaire

11. Pilot the full-length questionnaire revision.

12. Conduct reliability check with repeat administration to the same respondents.

The plan as outlined above was time-scaled so as to allocate one academic term for step one to five, with a further term for steps six to twelve, thereby enabling large-scale administration of the questionnaire to take place early in the third term, to allow time for coding of the responses and data-analysis to be commenced later in the same term. Outcomes of the twelve-step development programme outlined above will next be described, commencing on the following page:-

Step One.

The first stage of development yielded the set of research questions shown below:-

- A. How are British adolescents of secondary school age likely to react when they register the existence of personal problems?
- B. What perceptions do British adolescents of secondary school age hold regarding the range of their personal problems?
- C. What is the extent of adolescents' knowledge about their own school's facility to offer help to students with personal problems?
- D. Which persons are identified by adolescents as preferred helpers?
- E. Given the opportunity to exercise choice, how would adolescent students attempt to shape the help available from teachers?
- F. What is the reported adolescent experience of receiving help for personal problems from teachers?
- G. To what extent do contemporary British adolescents with personal

problems avail themselves of teacher assistance?

H. How far do adolescents who acknowledge receiving help for personal problems in school value that experience?

The research questions listed above were used to generate 4 sub-sets of questionnaire items, categorised as Personal Information; School Information; Help Preferences; and Help Experience.

### Step Two.

In the second stage, previous school-based questionnaire studies of adolescent students were culled for items which were in any way related to the research questions as outlined. This pool of information was then more closely reviewed to extract the most pertinent items, which were then in turn subjected to a further process of reconstruction, and where appropriate re-combination, in order to optimise goodness-of-fit with the present research objectives.

### Step Three.

In the third step, questionnaire items were distributed into the 4 sub-sets previously referred to, and further elements were assembled to include issues not previously covered from a consumer perspective. By these means, seven questions were generated regarding Personal Information, 10 questions related to School Information; 13 questions were derived regarding Help Preferences, and 11 questions related to the area of Help Experience; i.e. a total of 40 items in all, with the main emphasis placed upon exploring student preferences. While a small number of items in the initial draft were closed questions offering between 2 and 26 choices, the majority of the questionnaire items were phrased as open questions in order to minimise the constraints placed upon respondents in constructing their answers.

### Step Four.

For the fourth step, an experienced designer of questionnaires (Dr. Jeff Moore, of the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Hull) was consulted for an informed review of the initial draft. This consultation proved fruitful, and closer inspection of the questionnaire indicated that the vocabulary level of certain items appeared rather high. It also became apparent that open questions posed difficulty for educationally or culturally disadvantaged adolescents in writing replies within the short time-frame available within school timetable constraints.



### Step Five.

In the light of the foregoing advice, extensive re-drafting of the questionnaire was subsequently undertaken during step five, when most of the open-ended questions were eliminated, and a positive frame was also assigned to all the questions, in light of a recommendation by Schriesheim & Hill (1981) that empirical evidence does not support the convention of mixing positively and negatively-worded items for psychological measures.

### Step Six.

At step six, the revised draft was referred to an independent statistician for further review. From this rather different perspective, the advice forthcoming was that the coding of open-ended questions would have proved more problematic than would coding of closed-question alternatives, and that the categorical nature of the information likely to be derived would favour a non-parametric analysis of the data.

Upon further examination, it was considered prudent to reconstruct the questionnaire entirely with closed questions, couched in terms as close to child-centred language as seemed possible. In this revision, the number of questions requesting Personal Information was reduced to five; those bearing on School Information were

contracted to eight; the set of questions relating to Help Preferences remained at thirteen; and finally, the group of questions for Help Experience were expanded to fourteen. Because of the varying complexity of each question, the range of multiple choices per item ranged from two to fourteen, with an average of just under five choices per question. In light of the multiple-choice format adopted, a maximum of 154 responses was required from each student.

#### Step Seven.

During step seven, a single-page standard letter was drafted which requested co-operation from participating schools, and questionnaire OHP acetates were developed from the corresponding printed pages. A modification sheet was also constructed, showing items numbered in keeping with the questionnaire format, accompanied by line-spaces to enable feedback from students to be recorded verbatim.

#### Step Eight.

At step eight, senior members of staff from four comprehensive schools, (two in rural and two in urban locations) were contacted to arrange feedback sessions with mixed teaching groups for each of three discrete age-ranges, (i.e. 12-13 years; 14-15 years; and 16-17 years.) to ensure that a reasonable breadth of opinion could be obtained. For each

of the 12 mixed groups identified (i.e. three age-ranges across four schools) following a brief introduction, remarks upon the purpose of the questionnaire and suggestions for its improvement were requested. Then the group was exposed to an OHP display of the questionnaire presented one item at a time, and detailed comment invited. As students' comments were given so they were noted down, and discussed further to encourage group participation in the process of modification. At the end of the review of individual items, these review groups were also asked to make additional observations regarding the design of the questionnaire as a whole, and these comments were also recorded.

#### Step Nine.

During step nine, feedback from all the groups was subsequently collated, and this yielded a total of 58 suggested questionnaire modification (mainly to the wording) which lead to further editing and re-drafting of the questionnaire items. An additional question was also added by request to Part One of the questionnaire, bringing the final distribution of questions to six for Personal Information, eight for School Information, thirteen for Help Preferences, and fourteen for Help Experience, yielding a total of 41 questions in all, with a range of four to fourteen choices per question.

### Step Ten.

At step ten, brief background notes for teachers were formulated, as displayed in the Appendix of Materials at the rear of this thesis.

### Step Eleven.

At step eleven, the full-length questionnaire was administered to a mixed-sex group of 31 secondary students, of 14-15 years of age. This was intended to identify any remaining questionnaire items which might have posed comprehension difficulties. In the event, these students reported that they had understood both the introductory information and individual questionnaire items. However, one student ticked two conflicting choices for item 1.6, indicating a possible problem of interpretation, which resulted in a small change to the wording. Multiple responses to item 3.13 by two other students also showed up a need to clarify priorities. This was achieved by requesting a single response on the question. This pilot administration was helpful in confirming that from a student perspective, the use of language appeared appropriate and the layout clear, so that no further modifications appeared to be indicated.

### Step Twelve.

At step 12, questionnaire text was found to produce a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 5.8 (i.e. an age-equivalent score of just below 11 years) and a Flesch Reading Ease score of 79.5. The questionnaires were administered to a group of 50 secondary students of 13-16 years of age, with a follow-up administration to the same group 2 weeks later, to establish the level of response consistency. The total yield from this exercise was a usable set of 42 pairs of questionnaires. i.e. two completed questionnaires from 42 students. This difference in the number of students occurred because, as frequently happens in school-based fieldwork, six individuals were absent for various reasons on the second occasion, and two others returned inappropriately completed materials, having filled in different questionnaire sections on the two different occasions, as a result of differing experience of receiving help in school during the interim period.

The procedure followed was the same on both of the preceding administrations. The group was seated so that students were in the same numbered place on each occasion. When they were settled, the questionnaire sheets were distributed, the material on the Student Information Sheet was read out, and the group was directed to enter their identifying number in the top left-hand corner of the front page.

When the introductory information had been delivered, the group was invited to ask any questions about the task at hand that they wished to, (in the event, few were forthcoming) and these queries were answered as they arose. Following the brief

question-and-answer interlude, the students were asked to look at page one of the questionnaire. They were then given further direction to introduce the controlled presentation employed to compensate for differential levels of reading competence.

The students were conducted through Part One of the questionnaire (presented on white pages) one item at a time, and then the group was directed to turn to Part Two, (presented on yellow pages) which was worked through in the manner established for Part One. As soon as Part Two was also completed, directions followed for choosing which final part of the questionnaire to complete, as per the protocol previously described. Part Three and Part Four were presented on green pages and blue pages respectively.

The group was then given time to finish the questionnaire, and students who finished first were directed to draw on the back page while the others caught up. Next the group was asked to check through the questionnaire to ensure that they had not missed any relevant items, and that they had written the numerals that matched their numbered place on the front page of the questionnaire. Queries and comments were then invited and answered directly, and the students were thanked for their co-operation.

## Question Content

Set up for completion by all of the students, Part One of the questionnaire included an initial item exploring the extent to which students preferred to socialise with others, followed by five further items exploring their problem-focussed perceptions. These questions sought to determine the extent to which young adolescents felt aware of having problems, the means by which they dealt with them, the range of problems that they were likely to need help with, and the degree to which they solved problems independently.

Part Two questions, also formulated for completion by all of the students, were aimed at investigating students' perceptions of helping resources in school. They were worded to discover how far the respondents thought that it was possible to get help in school, which adult they identified as a potential helper, how easy it was to contact the person identified, how long they would expect to wait to receive help, and whether they had either wanted, asked for, or received help for a personal problem.

Early questions for Part Three, which was directed towards students who had not received help with a personal problem in school, were constructed to investigate student choice of either formal or informal helpers, their preferred mode of contact, and their favoured location and time of meeting. Later questions covered student preferences on variables involved in the helping process. These incorporated initial helper support in communicating about problems or feelings, in exploring options and potential solutions,

and reasons for terminating helper contact. A final item sought the advice which students might offer to a friend with a personal problem in school.

Part Four questions were targetted at those students who had direct experience of getting help with a personal problem in school. Here, the initial item explored the amount of social influence upon seeking help, and this was followed by a series of questions probing student perception of specific helper behaviours during the student-teacher interaction. A final set of items tested student evaluation of whether their expectations had been met, how far the support provided had been helpful, the effect of teacher intervention upon student problems, and the categorisation of a range of topics as easy or hard for students to talk about.

The completed sets of questions for each of the four parts of the research questionnaire can be inspected in the relevant appendix at the rear of this document, where they are displayed in the final format adopted for the survey phase of the investigation.

### Reliability

For the usable 42 pairs of questionnaires obtained from Step Twelve of the question development procedure, the two sets of responses given by each student were compared, and any differences occurring over the 2-week interval noted. Response-patterns were



then tabulated for the group as a whole. From a theoretical viewpoint, the data obtained were nominal rather than ordinal, so that higher scores did not represent greater proficiency and lower scores did not indicate lesser proficiency on the part of the students responding. Nor, from a slightly different perspective, could it be assumed that scores were normally distributed amongst the group. Therefore certain assumptions required for a conventional estimate of test-retest reliability using, for example, Pearson's product-moment coefficient, or Cronbach's alpha, could not safely be met. Consequently the adoption of an alternative paradigm became necessary, and a reliability index was calculated using the formula set out below:-

$$\text{Reliability Index} = \frac{\text{Total number of responses matching}}{\text{Total number of responses}} \times 100$$

The above formula yielded a reliability index of 87%, which was deemed reasonable for the mixed-sex, mixed-age, and mixed-ability sample of students involved.

### Validity

In keeping with a recommendation by Johnson (1978) another reason that pilot testing was incorporated into the development of the survey instrument was in order to ensure validity of the questionnaire items. From the outset, secondary students were carefully consulted at different stages in the design process, (notably at step eight for the second

revision, and steps eleven and twelve for the third revision) in order to optimise the goodness of fit regarding adolescent concerns. At each of these steps, particular attention was paid to the scope of the questionnaire, the selection of specific question topics, the vocabulary employed, the phrasing of the questions, the clarity and style of presentation, also the requested mode of responding. In light of the positive feedback received from the students sampled at Step Eleven, questionnaire validity appeared adequate to serve the purposes for which the instrument was designed.

## **Part B: Survey Implementation Methodology**

### Recruitment and Survey Management Procedures

#### Recruitment Procedure

To locate sites for surveying student responses, telephone calls were placed to the Head teachers of a number of LEA maintained secondary schools, in order to determine whether in principle they would be willing for their students to participate. None of the schools which had participated in the survey development fieldwork were approached

again at this stage, in order to avoid biasing the results through repeated exposure to the questionnaire items on the part of the respondents.

At this exploratory stage, some schools declined to take part, for a variety of reasons. These included impending OFSTED inspection, staffing difficulties including illness and training functions, internal school politics, timetabling problems, and National Curriculum requirements. From the remainder, eight schools were selected, four in urban catchment areas and four located out of town, drawing their students from rural primary schools. Each of these institutions received a follow-up presentation delivered to the senior management team. The presentation consisted of an outline of the purpose of the survey, an introduction to the materials involved, an outline of the administration requirements for covering a target number of 360 students, and a discussion of any questions raised. This session was ended with a request for further internal discussion with any other members of the school staff who might need to be involved.

The schools were not pressed for a decision at the time of the presentation in order to provide a necessary opportunity for internal communication between members of the senior management team and their colleagues at other levels of the schools' organisation. However, a follow-up telephone call was made to each school concerned between 48 and 72 hours afterwards, which indicated that seven of the schools were willing to go ahead with conducting the survey as it had been described to them. To obtain a balance between the numbers of urban and rural schools, one urban school was dropped accordingly. Arrangements were subsequently set in hand for the relevant

number of questionnaires and sets of back-up materials to be produced, and these items were subsequently delivered to the participating sites for administration during May, 1994.

#### Survey Management Procedure

In keeping with the research plan, a total of 2,275 questionnaires were distributed (with a minimum of 360 per school). The actual number for each school varied to accommodate organisational differences in the individual sites concerned. To maintain consistency of approach, in each school a member of the senior management team was identified as the person responsible for internal delivery of the questionnaires on a group basis, in accordance with the administration protocol. After a final on-site review of the procedures had been conducted with them, all of the schools involved were then able to complete and collate and the questionnaires during June 1994. As soon as they indicated that this task had been completed, arrangements were made to collect the completed questionnaires within 24 hours.

## Sample Derivation and Structure

### Sample Derivation

Amongst the total number of questionnaires distributed as explained in the procedure, 115 copies were found to have become spoiled or misplaced, leaving a usable set of 2160 questionnaires. To create a more manageable data-set while giving every student an equal chance of being included in the analysis, a 25% random sample, stratified by age and sex, was extracted from the total of usable questionnaires.

### Sample Structure

This yielded a data-set of 540 cases, made up of 90 students drawn from mixed-ability teaching groups in each of the six research sites involved. These sub-sets of 90 students were constructed as shown in Table 1 which follows:-

Table 1: Structure of The Sample of 90 Students Drawn From Each of Six Schools in The Survey Research

	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Row Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	15	15	15	45
<b>Female</b>	15	15	15	45
<b>Column Total</b>	30	30	30	90

The survey covered a total of 270 males and 270 females, in a matching year and sex distribution for each of the six participating schools. Of the 540 students included in the data analysis, 180 were in Year Eight, 180 in Year Nine, and 180 in Year Ten. The students were drawn from mixed ability teaching groups, and ranged in age from a minimum of 12 years 10 months to a maximum of 15 years 10 months, with an average age of 14 years 4months.

### Social Class Information

Paternal occupation data, the index of social class for the students included in this sample, will be presented on two dimensions. The first of these compares the distribution obtained for the sample with national average levels extracted from official sources (Office Of Population Surveys and Censuses, 1987). The data were analysed using the Chi-square function of Microsoft Excel. Expected frequencies were calculated by applying national percentages (Office Of Population Surveys and Censuses, op.cit.) to the paternal employment data for the locality from which the sample was drawn. In Table 2 below, the second comparison contrasts within-sample data for urban students with that for rural students. Since the direction of difference was not specified, and there were six categories of employment data, the results are given for two-tailed tests with five degrees of freedom.

Table 2: Distribution of Paternal Employment Across Sample and National Data-Sets

For The Survey Research Phase

<b>Father's Employment</b>	<b>Sample Average (%)</b>	<b>National Average (%)</b>
Professional	4	7
Managerial/Technical	22	21
Skilled (Manual)	9	38
Skilled (White Collar)	40	17
Semi-skilled	16	13
Unskilled	8	4

Note: The sample average in Table 2 is based upon data for both urban and rural students.

Certain similarities emerged in the social class distribution for local and national averages. These were demonstrated by the relatively low percentages of professional and unskilled workers in each case, and in the comparable proportions of managerial/technical and semi-skilled persons represented. However, some notable differences also occurred. Firstly, these are shown by a percentage of fathers in skilled manual employment within the sample which is less than a quarter of the national average. Secondly, they are shown by more than double the national level of white collar workers being found amongst fathers of the local student sample. Where schools participate in a research project on a voluntary basis, as they did in the present study, some divergence from data based upon national averages is perhaps to be expected. Between-group differences were statistically significant ( $p < .0005$ ) suggesting that some caution may be appropriate in generalising the survey findings beyond groups with a similar social class profile.

Table 3: Distribution of Paternal Employment Across Rural and Urban Students

<b>Father's Employment</b>	<b>Rural Sample (%)</b>	<b>Urban Sample (%)</b>
Professional	5	3
Managerial/Technical	28	16
Skilled (Manual)	8	8
Skilled (White Collar)	35	44
Semi-skilled	15	16
Unskilled	6	9

The data from Table 3 provide percentages which differ significantly ( $p < .0005$ ) from the national average, in the case of families of both rural and urban students. The overall difference between the local and national data in Table 2 may be driven by the high number of white collar worker amongst the families of the urban students, and the comparatively high percentage of fathers in managerial/technical positions amongst the families of rural students. These same observations may also go some way towards accounting for the significant difference ( $p < .0005$ ) which occurred in the social class data between the families of rural and urban students. One possible explanation for this difference may be that a greater proportion of higher-income families choose to live in rural settings.



## School Related Information

### General School Information

Of the schools participating in this project, three were sited in rural locations and three were in urban environments. The rural schools served populations of 691, 736, and 803 students respectively. In comparison, the urban schools provided for populations of 1363, 1029, and 915 students. Hence the rural schools had an average of 743 students, and the urban students 1102 students, so that the latter were the larger educational establishments. According to the Small Area Statistics ( Central Statistical Office, 1995) both rural and urban schools were of representative size for the LEA concerned, where 34% of the secondary schools cater for 401-800 students, and 27% provide for 1000 or more students. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for each school was at or below one teacher per twenty students. Each of the schools expressed to the author an active concern for the wellbeing of its students, backed by appropriate admissions, anti-bullying, complaints, discipline, and special needs policies, in accordance with the Education Acts of 1980, 1988, and 1993, and as required by the LEA. Each school also had an appointed Deputy Head with responsibility for pastoral care, and maintained corporate responsibility through the Senior Management Team.

## Individual School Information

### School One.

This school provided for 691 students. Prime responsibility discussion of problems rested with Form Teachers. Parents were advised that it was essential to make Form Teachers aware of any circumstances that could affect their child's attitude or performance in school. Careers advice was available within the Personal and Social Education programme, and included access to a careers library, computer system, and work experience. The school furnished parents and pupils with a Code of Conduct, and sanctions included being placed on report, extra work assignments, loss of privilege, and detention. No written outline of privileges or incentives available for students was provided.

### School Two.

This school provided for 736 students, and indicated Form Teachers were responsible for keeping an overall view of the welfare of its pupils. A Personal and Social Education programme was provided, and Careers Guidance included input from the Careers Service, colleges, and work experience. All pupils were issued with a Code Of Conduct, and sanctions for bad behaviour included being placed on report, withdrawal from lessons, and detention. School Six was the only one to state that it ran a positive

discipline system which credited students for achieving targets in attendance and social behaviour, as well as for the quality of their work.

### School Three.

The population of this school was 803 students, and pastoral care was in the hands of the Year Tutors. However it was noted that the Form Teacher handled day-to-day pastoral care matters. In this school, Careers Guidance was again delivered to students as a part of the Personal and Social Education programme, which included input from the Careers Guidance Service, colleges, and work experience during the final year. This school was alone in mentioning that a merit system was in place for all of its students without first describing a multiple-sanction punishment system.

### School Four.

The population of this school was 1363 students, with a policy that all staff gave priority to pupil welfare. However, Heads of Year and Form Tutors were held responsible for the day-to-day welfare of the pupils. In this school, morning registration time was the period identified for discussing problems on an individual basis. Parents were asked to inform Form Tutors of any relevant factors which might have a bearing upon the performance or attitude of their children. This school added that Careers

information included input from Careers Service staff, educational visits, and work experience placements. Information on school rules was given to all parents, and posted in every classroom. Where difficulties occurred, parental involvement was automatically sought. No written description of rewards or incentive management procedures was available.

#### School Five.

The population of this school was 1029 students. Like other schools, School Five asserted that all of its teachers had responsibility for pastoral care, but that pupils were primarily in the care of their Form Tutor. Careers advice was offered as a part of the Personal and Social Education programme, with inputs from Careers Service personnel, colleges, other outside agencies, and work experience in the final year. The staff operated a whole-school behaviour policy, which included issuing every student with advice on coping with bullying. School policy was based upon a minimum of rules, and achievement was rewarded by a system of house points. Sanctions included additional work, detention, and parental involvement.

### School Six.

The population of this school was 915 students, and pastoral care was achieved through a close relationship between parents, teachers and pupils. This school noted that parents were always welcome. Delivery of pastoral care was through a team consisting of the Heads of Upper or Lower School, the Year Tutors, and the Form Tutors. Careers education was provided as a part of the Personal and Social Education programme, and included access to a careers library and computer system, inputs from college and industry sources and work experience. School rules were kept to a minimum, and all students were given a copy of the school's Code of Conduct. Sanctions mentioned were placing pupils on report and parental involvement. No written description of rewards or incentive management procedures were available.

The results of the survey obtained from the student sample attending the above secondary schools will be presented in the chapter which follows.

## **Part C: Experimental Fieldwork Methodology**

### Rationale

The experimental phase of the research was formulated to evaluate a set of self-esteem related hypotheses in a sample of secondary school students. In particular, it was set up to investigate whether the threat-to-self-esteem (TTSE) model advanced by Fisher, Nadler, & De Paulo (1983) might apply in early to mid-adolescents seeking psychological assistance for personal problems in school. As described in the literature review, a key feature of the TTSE hypothesis is that it proposes that in helping situations, threat-to-self-esteem exercises a more powerful effect upon individuals with relatively high self-esteem, by placing their pervading perceptions of personal competence at risk. This phase was designed to accommodate testing of the following related hypotheses:-

**H<sub>0</sub>** That there would be no significant between-group differences in self-esteem scores.(The null hypothesis.)

**H<sub>1</sub>** That adolescents receiving help may have lower initial self-esteem scores than peers receiving an alternative educational treatment.

**H<sub>2</sub>** That those students having the highest initial self-esteem in the group receiving help should show the greatest post-treatment reduction in self-esteem scores, because of a threat-to-self-esteem effect.

**H<sub>3</sub>** That post-treatment self-esteem scores may be lower for the whole group of adolescents receiving a personal emphasis treatment than for peers receiving an alternative educational treatment, because of a threat-to-self-esteem effect.

### Experimental Design.

As Littrell, Malia, & Vanderwood (1995) have commented, research designs in real-life settings are often the product of negotiations between the researcher and the participants in the settings. This phase of the fieldwork was carried out in a normal secondary-school setting, with students who were offered psychological assistance for problems in relating to others. In this context it was not feasible for ethical reasons to employ the randomised allocation of subjects to treatments called for in a true experimental design. Accordingly, the alternative of a quasi-experimental, matched subjects, pre-test/post-test design was adopted to fit the circumstances under which the research was carried out.

### Recruitment Procedure

The recruitment procedure for the experimental phase of the research was set up so that students could decide for themselves whether or not to participate, on the basis of information provided by a member of the school's senior management team. Accordingly, students in three-quarters of the teaching groups in years eight, nine and ten were informed that they could receive individual help for problems experienced in relationships with others. They were told that this help was offered by a psychologist who was independent of the teaching staff, that any problems discussed would be treated in strict confidence, that their participation was voluntary, and that they would be released from lessons for one period to take part. Those responding were assigned to the personal emphasis treatment described below on a first-come, first-served basis.

In contrast, students from one quarter of the teaching groups from years eight through ten were informed of an opportunity to help evaluate some educational materials designed for use with young people in their age-group. They were also instructed that this task was being undertaken by a psychologist independent of the teaching staff, that their opinion would not be declared to anyone else, and that this was a voluntary activity, for which they would be released from lessons for one period. Those responding were matched by age and sex with students from the other treatment condition, and assigned to the educational emphasis treatment described below, likewise on a first-come, first-served basis.



### Sample Information

The subjects of this investigation were 60 young adolescents, comprising a mixed-sex sample of 30 boys and 30 girls. In accord with the procedure followed for the survey phase of the research, the students were drawn from mixed ability teaching groups, and ranged in age from a minimum of 12 years 10 months to a maximum of 15 years 10 months, with an average age of 14 years 4months. The sample distribution is shown in Table 4 below:-

Table 4: Structure of The Sample of 60 Experimental Phase Students.

	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Row Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	10	10	10	30
<b>Female</b>	10	10	10	30
<b>Column Total</b>	20	20	20	60

Each of these students was in full-time secondary education. They all attended the same suburban comprehensive school at the time that the research was carried out. None of these students had participated in the exploratory or survey phases of the research, and all were unknown to the author prior to the actual time of the intervention.

### Social Class Information

Social class data for students included in the experimental phase of the research were based upon paternal employment data. This will be presented in the same sequence as that previously described for the survey phase of the fieldwork, i.e. by providing a national comparison before a local comparison. Table 5 below displays the national comparison data.

Table 5: Distribution of Paternal Employment Across Sample and National Data For The Experimental Research Phase.

<b>Father's Employment</b>	<b>Sample Average</b>	<b>National Average</b>
Professional	4	7
Managerial/Technical	24	21
Skilled (Manual)	8	38
Skilled (White Collar)	36	17
Semi-skilled	16	13
Unskilled	7	4

As with the survey participants, certain similarities were noted in the distributions of employment for local and national samples in Table 5 above. Once again, these included relatively low percentages of both professional and unskilled workers, and in each case the proportions of managerial and technical workers were similar. The differences which were most striking embraced a percentage of local fathers in skilled manual employment which was less than one quarter of the national average, and more than double the national average for white collar workers. These differences parallel

those found for fathers of students included in the survey phase of the research, and are also statistically significant at the .0005 level (5df; two-tailed test).

Further comparison demonstrated that social class data for the experimental phase participants generally reflected data for students taking part in the survey phase of the research. Relevant details are displayed in Table 6 which follows:-

Table 6: Distribution of Paternal Employment for The Survey and The Experimental Research Phases

<b>Father's Employment</b>	<b>Survey Phase Students</b>	<b>Experimental Phase Students</b>
Professional	4	4
Managerial/Technical	22	24
Skilled (Manual)	9	8
Skilled (White Collar)	40	36
Semi-skilled	16	16
Unskilled	8	7

As Table 6 reveals, the distributions for paternal employment are closely similar for each phase of the research. This is taken to reflect the fact that both sets of students were drawn from the same LEA area, albeit from different schools. Some similarity in employment trends appears likely given the geographical overlap between the families of the students involved.

### School Information

The population of this suburban school was 1080 students. The school policy was that pastoral care was in the hands of tutors who were responsible to the Heads of Year. The stated aim of the pastoral system was to help pupils with their personal growth. Careers Guidance was again delivered to students by teaching and Careers Service staff and through work experience placements. School rules were brought to the attention of to all parents, and were regularly reviewed with students. Neither a description of the school's sanctions policy, nor a description of rewards or incentive management procedures were available.

### General Procedure

The students involved in this phase of the fieldwork received a single-session exposure to one of two treatment conditions during June 1995. Just one exposure was employed in order to emulate the circumstances often prevailing during first-session contact between client and helper, which can be important in influencing the client's decision of whether or not to return for follow-up sessions.

Here the experimental group, (N=30; 15 males and 15 females) which consisted of students seeking psychological assistance in improving their relationships with others, received one-to-one intervention for their particular problem, i.e. the personal emphasis

treatment (PET) as described in detail below. The comparison group (N=30; 15 males and 15 females) consisted of volunteers drawn from teaching groups of average academic ability, matched for age and sex, who received individual educational assessment based upon common standardised tests, i.e. the educational emphasis treatment (EET) also as described separately below. This treatment was designed to provide an intervention of equal duration, but with reduced emotional intensity for those involved, as a contrast to the PET condition.

Students of average ability were sought for the EET group to reduce the likelihood of their experiencing cognitive strain or emotional discomfort associated with the information-processing demands of the assessment tasks involved. Test data in fact revealed that volunteers in the EET group met this requirement on both verbal IQ and oral reading test criteria. (Group mean IQ score = 106.25; S.D. = 14.08; Group mean reading score = 109.25; S.D. = 6.85.) These tests were not included in the PET condition due to the risk of violating client expectancies, a lack of relevance to the hypotheses being tested, and also because of the organisational limitations placed upon the research time available in a secondary school setting.

Common elements between the PET and EET treatment procedures comprised self-selection by the individuals concerned; parallel introduction and closure sequences; controlled duration of treatment exposure (constrained by school timetable considerations to a 40-minute period); one-to-one interaction with the researcher in a school office; and pre- and post-treatment ratings of self-esteem. Differences between

PET and EET treatment procedures included session orientation, (helping versus assessing); the tasks involved, the interventions employed, and the total amount of discussion engaged in.

### Group Procedure

#### PET Group Procedure

Once students in the personal emphasis treatment group were greeted by their first name and seated comfortably, they were given a verbal outline of the structure for the session. This indicated that while Yes/No responses to a short questionnaire would be sought at both the beginning and the end, most of the time would be available for talking about their problems. The CFSEI was then administered verbally, and the students' responses recorded verbatim on a response sheet. Then followed a request for problem-related information, and a problem-focused discussion which included the individual's stated feelings and values. This was augmented by eliciting students' problem-related attributions and self-statements; by exploring problem-reduced or problem-free areas of their experience; by reviewing their relevant skills and resources; and by discussing their alternative goals and potential solutions. Once this process had been completed, the follow-up administration of the CFSEI was undertaken, and the session was then brought to a close by complimenting the student on having turned up as arranged, having talked

over their circumstances in a clear and constructive fashion, and upon producing creative suggestions for handling the presenting problem.

### EET Group Procedure

Students in the educational emphasis treatment group were greeted and settled in the same way as those receiving assistance with a personal problem. However, while they were told that Yes/No answers to a brief questionnaire would be requested at the beginning and end of the session, it was also indicated that during the rest of the time, they would be asked to help in evaluating the clarity of some materials designed for use with children of their age. Moreover, they were informed that some of the materials involved would be different from those usually seen in their regular lessons, that some would be easy and some a little harder, and they were accordingly requested to do their best. To minimise any performance-related anxiety, they were also advised that it was the outcome for the group as a whole rather than that for any given member which was considered to be most important.

After this introduction, a request for school-related information was made, followed by administration of the pre-test CFSEI, WORD basic reading, the Verbal Scale of the WISC 111 UK, and the post-test CFSEI, during which the students' responses were noted as they progressed through the test materials. Like their peers who

received assistance with a personal problem, students in this group were complimented at the end of the session, although in this case for turning up when scheduled, for positive features of their test performance, (such as their vocabulary, reading fluency, or stating prompt answers for the test items presented.

## Instrumentation

### Introduction

Three contemporary measurement instruments were employed in the experimental phase of the research, namely the Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory (Battle,1992); the Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions, (Rust, Golombok, & Trickey, 1993); and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third UK Edition (Wechsler, Golombok & Rust, 1992). The main technical features of these instruments will next be outlined in turn, with each description being based upon information derived from the appropriate test manual.

### The Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory (CFSEI)

This device, designed for either individual or group administration, evolved from a 14-year research programme involving over 60 studies focused upon the individual's perception of his or her own work. Battle (1992) has reported that children referred by



their teachers for psychological assistance because of academic and/or emotional difficulties scored significantly lower on the CFSEI than controls who were not referred for psychological intervention.

Test-retest reliability data for the CFSEI fall within the range of  $r = 0.79$  to  $r = 0.92$ . Information on validity indicates correlations of  $r = 0.71$  to  $r = 0.80$  with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI;Coopersmith,1967);  $r = 0.75$  with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI); and  $r = -0.61$  with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).

The specific version of the CFSEI employed here (Form B) consists of a 30-item series of child-centred statements requiring Yes/No answers which can be administered in either written or verbal modes. This version of the CFSEI correlates  $r = 0.86$  ( $p < .01$ ) with the longer Form A, which contains 60 items. Published CFSEI means and standard deviations for a mixed sample of 274 early adolescents, include those for males (mean = 19.77; S.D. = 4.65); for females (mean = 19.19; S.D. = 4.41); and for both sexes combined (mean = 19.50; S.D. = 4.55). The CFSEI was chosen to provide a measure of global self-esteem since it is overall self-esteem which is implicated in the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis.

### The Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions (WORD)

This instrument, designed for individual administration with school-age children was developed from sub-tests of the more extensive Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WAIT). It took five years to construct, involving professionals on both sides of the Atlantic, and the individual efforts of 5,000 children. The major psychometric advantage of the WORD is that it is the only published reading test to date which is designed to integrate with the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children.

Test-retest reliability for the WORD is  $r = 0.94$  overall, with concomitant levels of  $r = 0.95$  for children of 13 and 14 years of age, and  $r = 0.88$  for 15 year olds. In terms of validity, the relevant data are correlations of  $r = 0.86$  with the decoding sub-test of the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA); and  $r = 0.84$  with the reading subscale of the revised version of the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-R). These data are of particular relevance because it was the 55-item Basic Reading Scale which was employed in this research. WORD Basic Reading required that children generate matching sounds to selected auditory and visual stimuli, and read aloud single and multi-syllable items, some of which are phonically regular, and others phonically irregular. In common with other tests of oral reading, the frequency of compound words increases in this test as the child progresses. The WORD was selected as being an up-to-date and representative measure of reading ability.

### The Wechsler Intelligence Scale For Children (WISC III UK)

The WISC III U.K. (Wechsler, Golombuk, & Rust 1992) is an individually administered test of cognitive functioning which derives from an extensive series of measures of global ability, including the Wechsler Bellvue Intelligence Scale (Wechsler, 1939); the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Wechsler, 1949); and the WISC-R U.K. (Wechsler, 1977). The standardisation of scores on the WISC III U.K. was based upon 2300 children in the American sample and 814 children in the UK sample, falling within the range 6-16 years of age.

Technical data for the WISC III U.K. include test-retest reliability figures of  $r = 0.93$  at 13 and 14 years of age, and  $r = 0.95$  at 15 years of age. Validity of the instrument is found in correlations of between  $r = 0.61$  and  $r = 0.82$  with other measures of global ability. In particular, the WISC III UK correlations are  $r = 0.82$  with the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M);  $r = 0.70$  with the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC); and  $r = 0.84$  with the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS).

The Verbal Scale of the WISC III UK was the cognitive assessment instrument employed in the course of the research reported here, and as used consisted of 5 subtests including Information (30 items); Similarities (17 items); Arithmetic (18 items); Vocabulary (32 items); and Digit Span (14 items); representing a maximum of 111 test

items. The WISC III UK was chosen because of its utilitarian application as a measure of general ability in both educational and clinical settings.

The results from the experimental phase procedures described above are presented in the chapter which follows.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

In statistical description, characteristics are summarised in numerical form. These characteristics are not limited to demographics, or data that describes general attributes of participants in a study, (such as numbers of males or females and their average ages) but include attributes of psychological significance. (Wakefield, 1996: 648.)

## **Data Analysis**

Each questionnaire response, from a pool of approximately 82,620 response-options, (i.e. 153 responses X 540 students) was assigned a numerical code of up to eight digits. The coded responses were then employed to construct a computerised ASCII database, the accuracy of which was independently validated. The data were subsequently analysed using an up-to-date version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Corporation, 1989-1994). The specific programme, SPSS For Windows, (version 6.1) was run on an IBM-compatible Compaq 386 computer, modified to accommodate the programme operating requirement for 8 megabytes of random access memory.

The particular techniques employed in the data-analysis included descriptive statistics (means, ranges, and standard deviations) Chi-square, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, Spearman's Rank-order Correlation, Student's t, Analysis of Variance, Analysis of Covariance, Linear Regression Analysis, and Multiple Regression. The results of these analyses are described at appropriate points in the outline which follows. Throughout this chapter, the recorded p-levels represent the probability of obtaining a test-statistic value (for instance with F or t-tests) at least as extreme as the one actually obtained (Kinnear & Gray, 1994).

## **Part A: Results For The Survey Phase of The Research**

### Introduction

Results for each one of the four parts of the questionnaire will next be presented in turn, commencing with Part One (Personal Details); then Part Two (School Information); and Part Three (Personal Preferences); followed by Part Four (Experience of Getting Help). Within each of the four parts of the questionnaire, data derived from the survey returns will be discussed in the following order:-

1. Overall Differences.
2. Gender Differences.
3. Year Group Differences.
4. School Differences.
5. Location Differences.

Overall Effects describe the results for the sample as a whole. Sex, Year Group, School, and Location Effects will present the results for the particular sub-set of students indicated by the variable label.

Throughout the presentation of results, student responses will generally be covered in a sequence corresponding to the questionnaire items from which they were derived. However, there are some exceptions for Part Three and Part Four, where it was deemed more appropriate to allow for the conventional course of the helping process. In

these instances it was assumed that referral necessarily preceded helper contact; that presentation of a problem was the forerunner of a review of the client's resources; that discussion was required before delivery of any helping intervention; and that client-helper interaction preceded termination of their contact. These assumptions about the helping process therefore determined the sequence in which the results are discussed for the latter two parts of the questionnaire.

When preparing this description, two further tactics have been adopted to enhance readability. Firstly, the discussion is generally limited to values at or beyond the .01 level of significance. This step has been taken to set a more stringent standard than that implied by the .05 criterion, and thereby minimise the likelihood of presenting outcomes that might be accounted for by chance occurrence by adhering to the 1% level. {A further reason is proposed by Ottenbacher (1991) who computed a Type 1 error rate of approximately 20% for results published at the .05 level in a survey of 369 statistical tests, which is much higher than the traditionally assumed 5% error rate.} Secondly, within the text percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, although percentage figures are given to one decimal place in the associated graphic inserts (the maximum obtainable in the Microsoft Graph facility). Where the total for any given Figure inserted in the text exceeds 100%, this is due to a questionnaire requirement that students should make multiple responses within the questions involved.



## Questionnaire Results Part One: Personal Details

### Overall Differences

#### Preferred social context.

Items in this part of the questionnaire set out to probe adolescent self-perceptions in the face of personal problems. The opening item asked students how they most liked to spend their time, in order to gain information about the context within which personal problems were likely to receive attention. In response, a large majority of the random sample of 540 students (74%) indicated that they liked to spend time with their friends. Just under 16% demonstrated a preference for spending time with their family, making peers by far the most popular focus of affiliation. Only 5% stated that they preferred to spend their time alone.

#### Number of personal problems.

While 10% of the respondents indicated that they had a lot of personal problems, 85% opined that they had few or no problems. Consequently, data on the number of problems identified as likely topics for help were extracted to verify the general perception of having a small amount of problems. The average for the sample worked out at almost

four personal problems per student, within a reported range of 0-11 problems. The related distribution is displayed in Figure One below:-

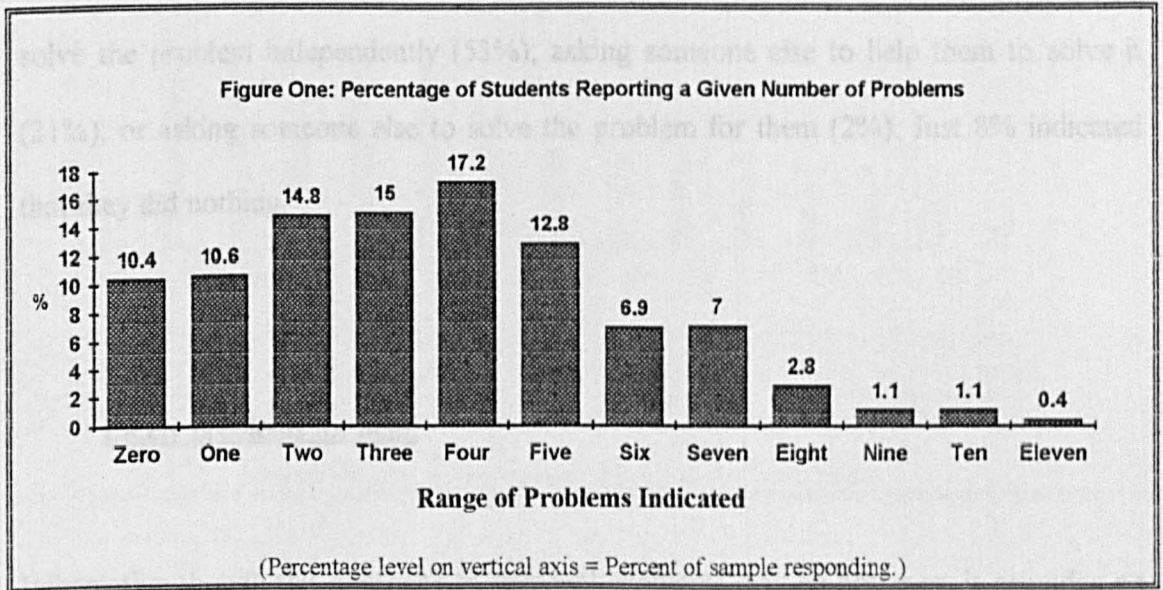


Figure One confirms that most students identified few problems that they would be likely to need help with. Indeed, a striking feature of the distribution is that it is skewed in that direction. Inspection of the above data also reveals that 81% of the respondents fell within the range of 0-5 problems, and 19% identified 6-11 problems, so that a relatively high number of problems appeared uncommon. Moreover, 60% of these secondary students indicated a moderate level of between 2 and 5 problems as potential targets for help.

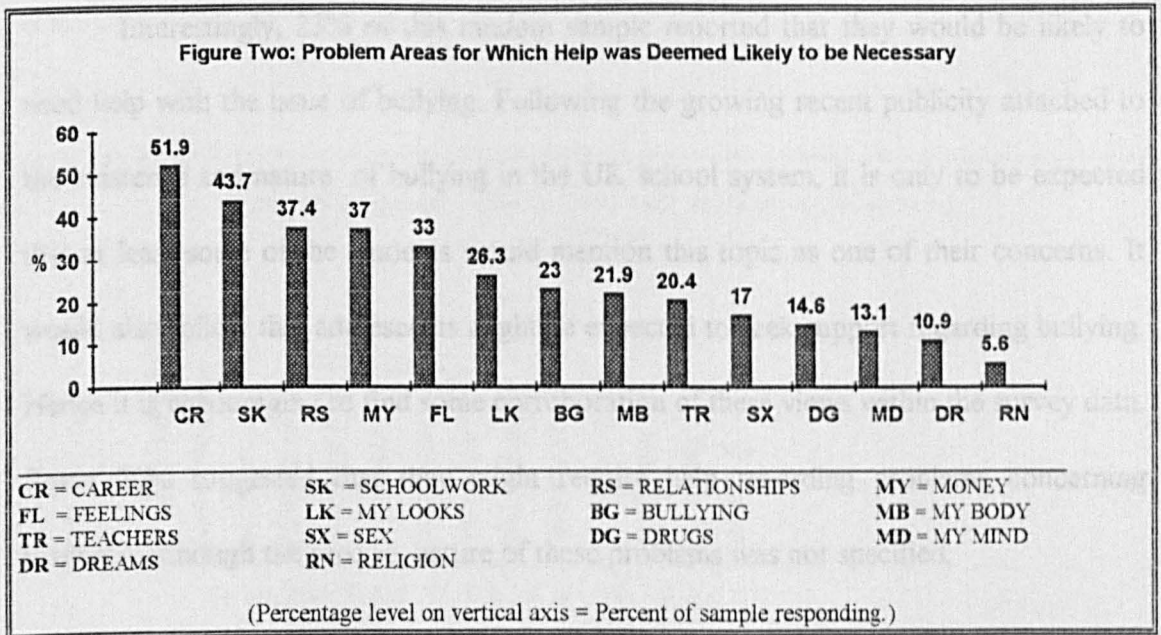
#### Coping responses.

Virtually 38% of the sample recorded that they initially reacted to a personal problem by worrying about it. However, 21% told themselves that the situation could have been

worse, and 14% said that they thought about something else. Only 10% indicated that their first reaction included getting angry, 4% reported that they laughed about the problem, and 3% admitted to crying. Subsequent coping strategies included trying to solve the problem independently (53%); asking someone else to help them to solve it (31%); or asking someone else to solve the problem for them (2%). Just 8% indicated that they did nothing.

#### Likely problems for help.

Informative though this approach to personal problems may be however, it provides no information about the type and range of problems that students had in mind. Specific issues which these secondary students predicted as likely topics for help from someone else are therefore displayed by order of magnitude in Figure Two which follows:-



Although this sample is made up of students who are substantially below the statutory school leaving age of 16 years old, many clearly have an eye to their own futures. The largest proportion of students (52%) indicated that help with careers was most likely to be sought. Schoolwork was also a salient issue for 44% of the sample. Therefore, it appears that a considerable proportion of those who by definition do not exhibit major academic problems consider themselves likely to require further help with their studies.

Over a third (37%) of this multi-school sample specified help with their relationships as a likely area of need. For a virtually equal percentage of the students, money was also identified as a topic for which they were likely to need support. A comparable 33% responded that their feelings were included amongst the topics for help in school, and 26% of the sample thought that they would need help regarding their looks, a concern which may have both physical and social implications.

Interestingly, 23% of this random sample reported that they would be likely to need help with the issue of bullying. Following the growing recent publicity attached to the existence and nature of bullying in the UK school system, it is only to be expected that at least some of the students would mention this topic as one of their concerns. It would also follow that adolescents might be expected to seek support regarding bullying. Hence it is encouraging to find some corroboration of these views within the survey data. Some 20% suggested that they might require help regarding problems concerning teachers, although the precise nature of these problems was not specified.

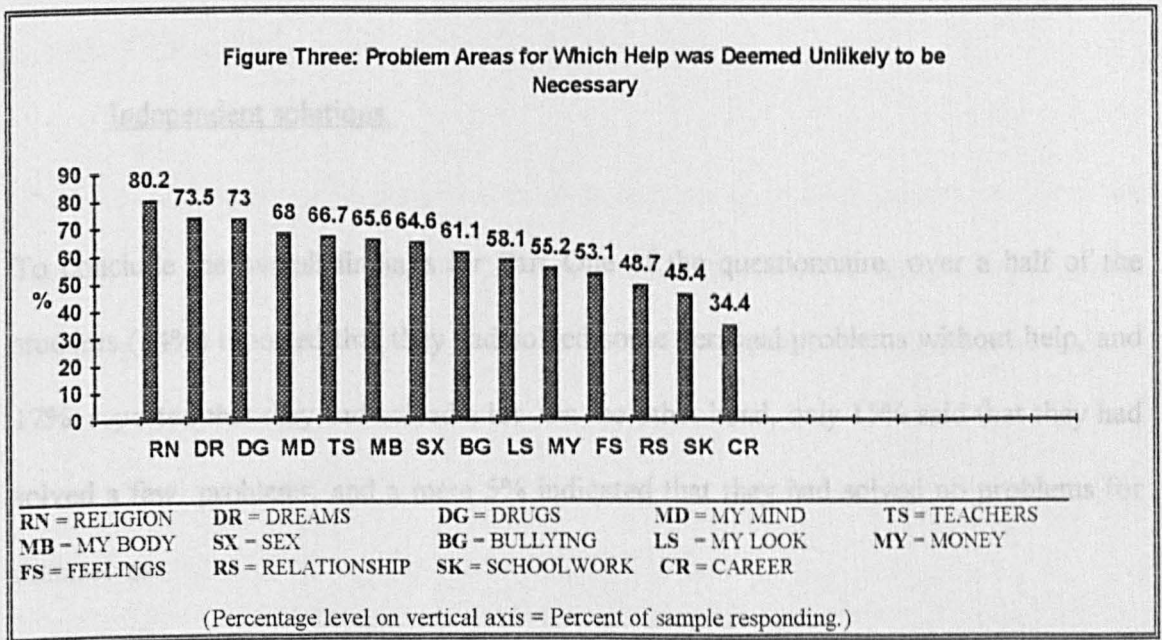
Evidence of physically-based concerns was further suggested by the 22% of these adolescents who indicated having some need for help with problems which were body-related, and 17% who identified sex as a potential topic for help. The latter items suggest that there may be a cluster of adolescent concerns associated with puberty and sexual behaviour. Despite some recent public alarm regarding adolescent substance abuse, only 15% of the sample reported a likely need for help over drugs. Neither did student concern regarding their own mental functioning feature prominently in the findings. Only a minority associated topics such as their mind (13%); dreams (11%); or religion (6%) with a potential need for help.

#### Unlikely problems for help.

Accepting that most of these 13-15 year-olds perceived themselves as having only a few problems, perhaps it should come as no great surprise that the majority of the sample appeared to believe it unlikely that they would need help with most of their problems, or



that there were different subsets of student opinion, as shown by Figure Three which follows:-



Here, between 68% and 80% of the sample mentioned religion, dreams, drugs, state of mind, and teachers as potential topics for which help would probably not be sought, while 53%-66% likewise highlighted matters pertaining to their body, to sex, to bullying, their looks, or to money. Moreover, between 34% and 49% of the sample indicated that they did not want to talk to teachers about either their personal relationships, their schoolwork, or their careers. This may be a rather unexpected outcome given that the latter two items would probably be considered stock-in-trade issues for many secondary teachers.

While Figure Three does not provide the perfectly inverted image of Figure Two which might be expected from the converse construct-set represented, (i.e. likely problem topics versus unlikely problem topics) nonetheless, the top seven items in

Figure Two also constitute the bottom seven items in Figure Three, suggesting that the highest group of values in the earlier table is reversed in the later one.

#### Independent solutions.

To conclude the overall findings for Part One of the questionnaire, over a half of the students (54%) reported that they had solved some personal problems without help, and 17% reported that they had solved a lot. On the other hand, only 15% said that they had solved a few problems, and a mere 5% indicated that they had solved no problems for themselves.

## Analysis of Main Variables For Questionnaire Part One

### Gender Differences

Part One of the questionnaire enabled students to make up to 23 responses, and from this data-set, a Chi-square analysis showed that gender differences which were significant at the 0.01 level or greater were apparent on 10 of the 23 items, as detailed in Table 7 which follows:-

Table 7: Gender Differences For Questionnaire Part One

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	1.2	Level of personal problems	13.35	4	<.01
2	1.3	Reaction to personal problems	74.15	6	<.001
3	1.4	Problem coping style	45.64	4	<.001
4	1.5A	Problem item (FEELINGS)	78.78	3	<.001
5	1.5B	Problem item (LOOKS)	30.89	3	<.001
6	1.5D	Problem item (BODY)	26.42	3	<.001
7	1.5H	Problem item (RELATIONSHIPS)	52.19	3	<.001
8	1.5J	Problem item (SEX)	25.03	3	<.001
9	1.5N	Problem item (CAREER)	14.47	3	<.01
10	1.6A	Independent solutions (A LOT)	9.80	1	<.01

Male predominance occurred on the following items. Significantly more males ( $p < .001$ ) indicated that they had no personal problems (item 1.2). However, if they did have problems, they would react initially by laughing at them, or by trying to think of something else (item 1.3). Significantly more males revealed that later they either do nothing about personal problems, or try to solve the problem themselves (item 1.4). More males than females responded that they had solved a lot of personal problems (item 1.6A) and stated that they would be likely to want career help (item 1.5N).



Female predominance was found in the items that involved a sense of having a lot of perceived problems (item 1.2 was checked by almost two thirds more females). Item 1.3 demonstrated that it was mostly female respondents who reacted to problems by worrying (twice as many females as males) or by crying (sixteen times more females than males). More than double the male number of females stated that they would ask someone else to help solve a personal problem (item 1.4). Over three times the number of females cited their feelings as a potential topic for help (item 1.5A). Needing help with relationships (item 1.5H) was also mentioned more frequently by female students, with twice as many females than males checking this item. Higher numbers of females (again more than double the male total) also indicated physical concerns, notably that they would be likely to seek help regarding their looks, (item 1.5B) their body (item 1.5D) and sex (item 1.5J).

To close this section, it is noted that while 10 out of the 23 responses requested had produced gender differences in the responses gained, 13 did not do so. This suggests both that the incidence of gender differences may be topic-sensitive, and that they should not be expected on every issue. (For example, the vast majority of both sexes preferred to spend time with their friends rather than their family.) Taken overall however, the mean number of problems for females (at 4.10) was somewhat higher than that for males (at 3.02). This difference between group mean scores was statistically significant ( $t$  for independent samples = 5.48; two-tailed test, 538 df;  $p < .001$ ).

### Year Group Differences

Within Part One of the questionnaire, the data-analysis revealed that significant age differences were uncommon, indicating that a high level of agreement pertained across the self-perception items which provided the focus of this part of the questionnaire. Results are displayed in Table 8 that follows:-

Table 8: Year Group Differences For Questionnaire Part One

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	1.6B	Independent solutions (NONE)	11.96	2	<.01
2	1.6C	Independent solutions (SOME)	12.16	2	<.01

Differences which were significant at the .01 level occurred in just 2 of the 23 responses requested. These were that Year 8 respondents most often reported that they had solved no problems without help from anyone else (item 1.6B) while Year 10 students most frequently indicated that they had solved some problems without help (item 1.6C).

### School Differences

Close agreement existed between the students of the 6 secondary schools involved with regard to the proportion of personal problems which they believed themselves to have; to their initial reactions to such problems; and to their applied strategies for managing the problems subsequently. However, for Part One of the questionnaire, statistically

significant differences were found between schools on 13 of the 42 multiple-choice options occurring in question 1.5, as indicated by Table 9 that follows:-

Table 9: School Differences For Questionnaire Part One

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	1.1	Preferred social context	33.11	15	<.01
2	1.5B	Likely Problem (LOOKS)	40.66	15	<.001
3	1.5C	Likely Problem (MIND)	48.91	15	<.001
4	1.5D	Likely Problem (BODY)	52.95	15	<.001
5	1.5E	Likely Problem (DREAMS)	82.25	15	<.001
6	1.5F	Likely Problem (RELIGION)	54.66	15	<.001
7	1.5G	Likely Problem (BULLYING)	80.94	15	<.001
8	1.5H	Likely Problem (RELATIONSHIPS)	71.44	15	<.001
9	1.5I	Likely Problem (MONEY)	42.55	15	<.001
10	1.5J	Likely Problem (SEX)	52.26	15	<.001
11	1.5K	Likely Problem (DRUGS)	47.87	15	<.001
12	1.5L	Likely Problem (TEACHERS)	62.51	15	<.001
13	1.5N	Likely Problem (CAREER)	46.35	15	<.001

Of the 13 items listed in Table 9, School One students responded more often to the options listing their mind (item 1.5C) as a Likely problem. Students from School Two formed the majority of respondents identifying their body as a Likely option (item 1.5D) and religion and drugs as Not Likely options (items 1.5F & 1.5K).

Students from School Three responded most often to 4 Not Likely options. These were their body (item 1.5D); dreams (item 1.5E); bullying (item 1.5G); and teachers (item 1.5L). They also formed the majority of those indicating that they preferred to spend time with their family (item 1.1). In the case of School Four, their students responded most frequently to 3 Likely options, namely religion (item 1.5F); money (item 1.5I); and career (item 1.5N); also one Not Likely option, for relationships (item 1.5H). They also gave most support to spending time with friends (item 1.1).

As far as personal problems were concerned, School Five students were distinguished through being the most frequent respondents on three Not Likely options, which were their looks (item 1.5B); money (item 1.5I); and sex (item 1.5J). School Six provided the majority of respondents for 5 Likely options. This set included bullying (item 1.5G); relationships (item 1.5H); sex (item 1.5J); drugs (item 1.5K) and teachers (item 1.5L). School Six also provided most responses for two Not Likely options, these were mind (item 1.5C) and career (item 1.5N).

Taking the average number of personal problems reported per school, some significant variation emerged between schools. A one-way analysis of variance, testing for differences between the mean number of problems per school, yielded an F-value of 3.74 (with 5 & 534 df) which was significant at the .003 level. An inspection of the mean values across all six schools showed that schools one, two, four, and five differed little from the overall mean of 3.56 problems per student. However, the mean value for School 3 was the lowest at 2.90, and that for School 6 was the highest at 4.32, suggesting that these two schools made a substantial contribution to the above finding.

The data discussed above are taken to indicate that even though there are general trends spread throughout the six schools concerned, some variation in student responses existed at the time that the survey was carried out. No over-riding reason became apparent to account for this outcome. However, a number of uncontrolled variables (e.g. contemporary leadership or curriculum changes, financial, political, or staffing considerations, and proximity to Ofsted inspection) operating within the research sites concerned may have influenced the reported findings.

## Location Differences

The questionnaire responses identified schools as having students drawn either from a rural or from an urban catchment area. These data were examined to identify any significant differences which were generated by the location variable. In the event, four such differences were pinpointed in Part One of the questionnaire, as shown in Table 10 below:-

Table 10: Location Differences For Questionnaire Part One

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	1.5B	Predicted need (LOOKS)	13.42	3	<.01
2	1.5E	Predicted need (DREAMS)	18.80	3	<.001
3	1.5G	Predicted need (BULLYING)	21.01	3	<.001
5	1.5L	Predicted need (TEACHERS)	14.54	3	<.01

Urban students proved to respond significantly more often to the Likely problem option, doing so in four instances. These were for those items involving their looks, (item 1.5B) dreams (item 1.5E) bullying (item 1.5G) teachers (item 1.5L). In 3 of these areas, (dreams, bullying, and teachers) the number of urban students responding was significantly higher.

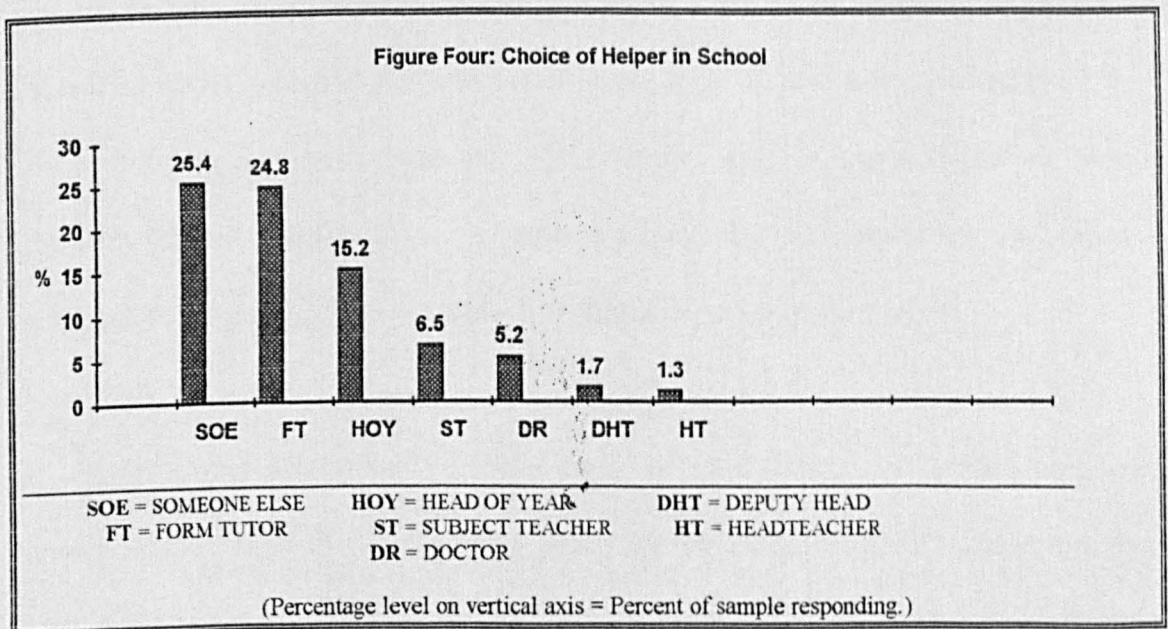
To conclude this discussion of the location outcomes for Part One of the questionnaire, the small number of significant differences recorded is taken to indicate substantial agreement between the two sub-groups across the majority of items included. However, the mean number of personal problems identified by rural students was lower than that for urban students (3.27 against 3.85). This difference was significant at the .004 level (t for independent samples = 2.90; two-tailed test, 538 df).

## Questionnaire Results Part Two: School Information.

### Overall Differences

#### Awareness and choice of helper

Part Two of the questionnaire sought information on students' perceptions of the helping resources available in school. Just over a half of the sample (53%) responded "Yes," when asked if it was possible to get help with personal problems in school. The remainder either indicated that help was not available or seemed unaware of its existence. Even greater disparity became apparent in student choice of a helper, however. Secondary students in this sample reported considerable diversity of opinion regarding their helper preferences, as Figure Four demonstrates:-

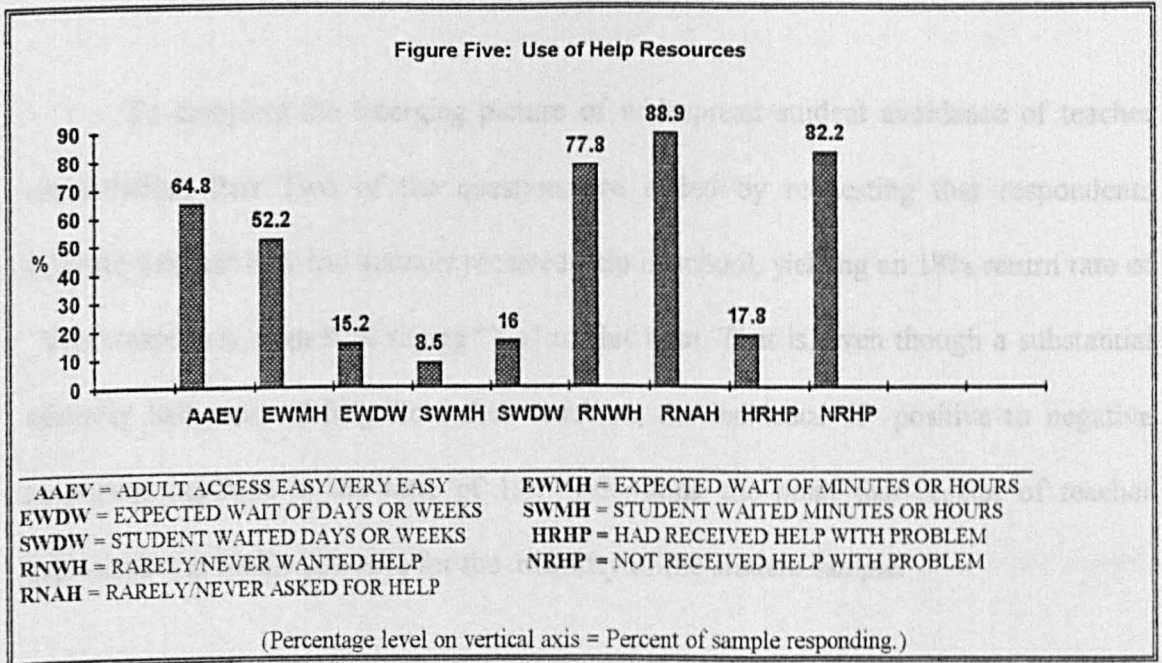


Virtually 25% of the students identified their Form Tutor, (the teacher seen twice daily for registration amongst other things) and virtually the same proportion identified

Someone Else (a member of the school staff who was not one of the designated teachers). A differential scale of support for other teaching staff followed. In comparison, 15% opted for their Head of Year, 7% identified a Subject Teacher, 2% selected their Deputy Head, and just 1% their Headteacher, the overall manager and authority figure in the school. A common thread running across these members of the teaching staff is the relative infrequency of contact which most students have with them compared to the connection maintained by a Form Tutor.

While the same constraint holds true for doctors, they enjoy a long-standing reputation as helpers, and this may go some way towards accounting for the marginally higher number of students (5%) who indicated that they would approach a doctor for help. However, this still means that 19 out of 20 students in this secondary sample would not do so.

## Use of resources for help in school



Whatever their choice of helper, Figure Five shows that virtually 65% of the sample felt that access to their chosen helper was easy or very easy, suggesting that the preferred adult maintained a possibility of contact for them. As to the issue of how much of a delay students would accept in receiving help, just above a half of the sample (52%) indicated that they would expect to wait minutes or hours, (and minutes were selected more than twice as often as hours) while only 15% checked days or weeks. However, where students had referred a problem to a helper in school, 9% had themselves waited minutes or hours before asking for help, while 16% had delayed for days or weeks.

There remains an open question as to whether young adolescents would seek help in school, since as far as personal problems were concerned, 78% stated that they had rarely or never wanted teacher assistance. Moreover, this attitudinal set appeared to be reflected in reported behaviour, given that 89% responded that they had rarely or



never asked for help. Hence minimal teacher consultation regarding personal problems was recorded by almost 9 students in every 10 surveyed.

To complete the emerging picture of widespread student avoidance of teacher consultation, Part Two of the questionnaire ended by requesting that respondents indicate whether they had actually received help in school, yielding an 18% return rate of “Yes” responses, with 82% saying “No” to this item. That is, even though a substantial minority had received help from their teachers, the incidence of positive to negative responses occurred in the ratio of 1:4, reiterating the point that receipt of teacher assistance was highly selective for the majority of the student sample.

### Analysis of Main Variables For Questionnaire Part Two

#### Gender Differences

Part Two of the questionnaire called for the students to give only a single response for each question, making a total of 8 responses in all, two of which revealed sex-differences at the required level of significance, as shown in Table 11 below:-

Table 11: Gender Differences For Questionnaire Part Two

No	ITEM	TOPIC	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	2.1	Believed help available in school	17.13	2	<.001
2	2.2	Personal choice of helper in school	37.33	7	<.001
3	2.5	Wanted teacher support	17.08	5	<.01

Significantly more male students identified their Form Tutor as a helper (Item 2.2). In contrast, a female majority was recorded for elements of all three questions listed in the table above. Indeed, 41% more females indicate that they thought help was available in school (item 2.1) suggesting a somewhat higher level of awareness amongst female adolescents. Significantly more females nominated a Subject Teacher, a Doctor, or Someone Else as a helper (item 2.2). As commented earlier, the question set-up did not make it possible to establish the identity of Someone Else. However, since the other options included were Head teacher, Deputy Head, Head of Year, Subject Teacher, Form Tutor, and School Doctor, these persons may be eliminated as potential candidates. Finally, more females ( $p < .01$ ) indicated that they had wanted teacher support in school.

### Year Group Differences

No year differences occurred throughout Part Two of the questionnaire, indicating that as far as school information is concerned, there is a high level of agreement across age-groups.

### School Differences

For Part Two of the questionnaire between-school differences were obtained for six of the eight items involved. No significant differences occurred for items 2.4 or 2.5, which referred respectively to students' expectations regarding waiting time for getting help, and to the frequency with which students had wanted a teacher to talk over a personal

problem in the past. The relevant statistically significant outcomes are displayed in Table 12 below:-

Table 12: School Differences For Questionnaire Part Two

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1.	2.1	Availability of help rating.	64.50	10	<.0005
2.	2.2	Identified potential helper	128.35	35	<.001
3	2.3	Ease of access to helper	43.00	25	<.001
4.	2.6	Requests for teacher assistance	50.95	25	<.001
5	2.7	Duration of waiting for assistance	39.50	25	<.001
6	2.8	Receipt of help in school	12.31	5	<.01

In this part of the questionnaire, School One students responded significantly more frequently on three options. Firstly, they more often indicated that they would go to their Deputy Headteacher for help (item 2.2). Secondly, more of them stated that they had waited hours for help (item 2.3); and thirdly, more of them said that they had not received help with a personal problem in school (item 2.8).

For School Two students, there were likewise three instances in which they were the most frequent respondents. More of them said that they would go to their Form Tutor for help (item 2.2); that they waited weeks for help (item 2.7); and that they had received help with a personal problem (item 2.8). School Three students predominated in two response categories, specifically, in support for a doctor as a helping person (item 2.2) and in being able to gain easy access to the doctor (item 2.3).

In the case of School Four, their students gave the most frequent responses in naming their Headteacher or Head of Year as a source of help (item 2.2) However, the latter person was cited 7 times more often. School Four also yielded most responses stating that students had difficulty in accessing their personal choice of helper (item 2.3).

School Five students were the most frequent responders in saying that help with personal problems was not available in school (item 2.1) and in responding that they had rarely or never asked for help (item 2.6).

For School Six students, there were five elements of Part Two in which they provided the strongest level of support. These included being able to get help with problems in school (item 2.1); selection of either a Subject Teacher or Someone Else as a helper (item 2.2); reporting that their helper could be seen Very Easily (item 2.3); in recording that they had sometimes asked for help (item 2.6); and in stating that they waited days before asking for help (item 2.7).

The data listed above on the school variable tend to follow the minimal-difference pattern reported for Part One of the questionnaire.

### Location Differences

No significant differences were found on the location variable, indicating a very high level of agreement between rural and urban students for this part of the questionnaire,



Figure Six shows which particular attributes most of the students regarded as important in identifying others as potential helpers. Well over a half of the sample (57%) identified friends the most popular choice of helper. With another 25% indicating that they would prefer one of their own parents, students appeared to favour known informal helpers. This impression is enhanced by the fact that choices indicating a friend's parent, someone else, another professional, a teacher, or another student, were all supported by less than 5% of the sample.

One variable influencing the popularity of friends may be that of chronological age. The importance of age as a qualifying variable is reinforced by the finding that 45% of the students stated a preference for a helper of their own age, perhaps because of an increased likelihood of maximising common experience. By way of contrast, less than 1% stated a preference for someone younger, while 26% opted for someone a little older, and a smaller set of 16% favoured someone a lot older. Age may not be the only factor however, since it appears that 43% of those responding would accept an older helper, even though this was not the modal choice.

Influential though it appears to be, age is clearly not the only important variable affecting choice of helper during early adolescence. In this sample of students, parents received 12 times more support as potential helpers than did teachers. Therefore, while helper age may render some adult helpers unattractive in a school setting, outside of school this finding may be altered by family variables. There is another notable exception to the hypothesis that age operates as the critical feature in choosing a helper. Figure five shows in addition that helper sex was considered meaningful. The students' response demonstrated that although 57% preferred a same-sex helper, only 14% favoured a





reflected a high level of personal responsibility for handling their problems. Even the option of having a friend contact the helper was selected by only 7.4% of the sample, and the alternative of having the family do it was favoured by a mere 5%. Notably, the very common pathway of teacher-initiated referral was favoured by less than 1% of these adolescents. Personal contact was much more strongly endorsed than contact by letter or by telephone.

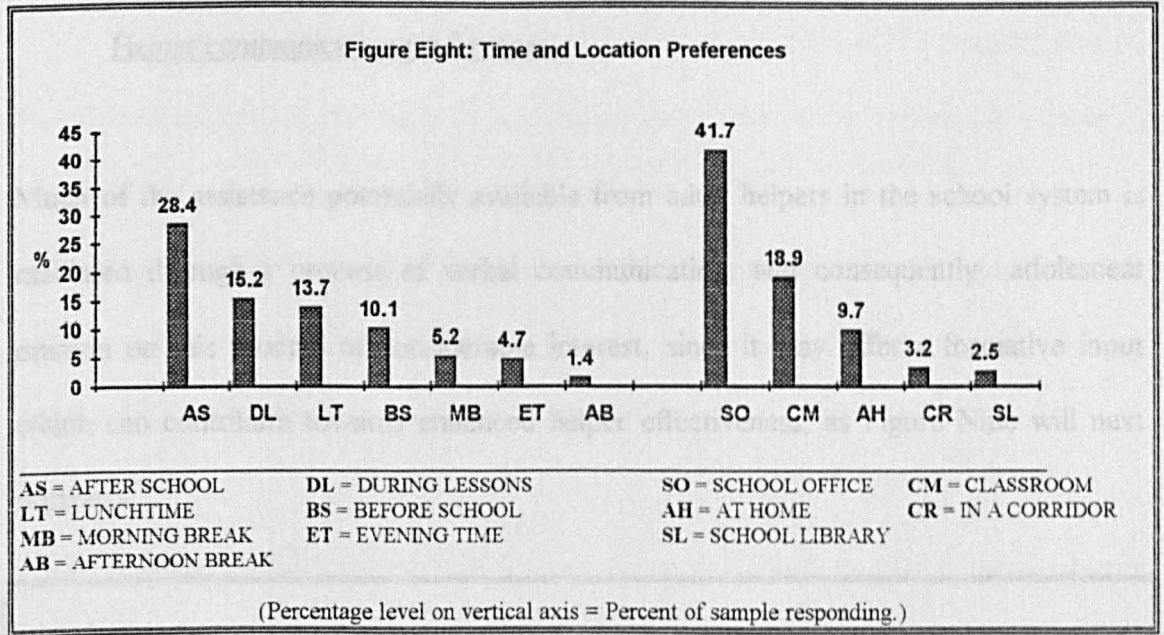
In addition, a reassuring level of coping is implicit in the finding that 71% of this group of students wanted a face-to-face meeting, in contrast to 3% stating a preference for telephone contact. Moreover, 52% of these teenagers wanted to enter into any post-referral meeting alone, i.e. just themselves with the teacher concerned, although another 31% said that they would rather have a friend present at that juncture. Only 5% wanted a parent to be present, and just under 2% wished their whole family to be there. Just below 3% of the students indicated a preference for meeting a helper in a group of students experiencing problems.

#### Meeting time and location preferences.

Adults may assume that young adolescents find professional priorities regarding the time and place of meetings all equally attractive, and Figure Eight provides information which bears on this issue:-



Figure Eight: Time and Location Preferences

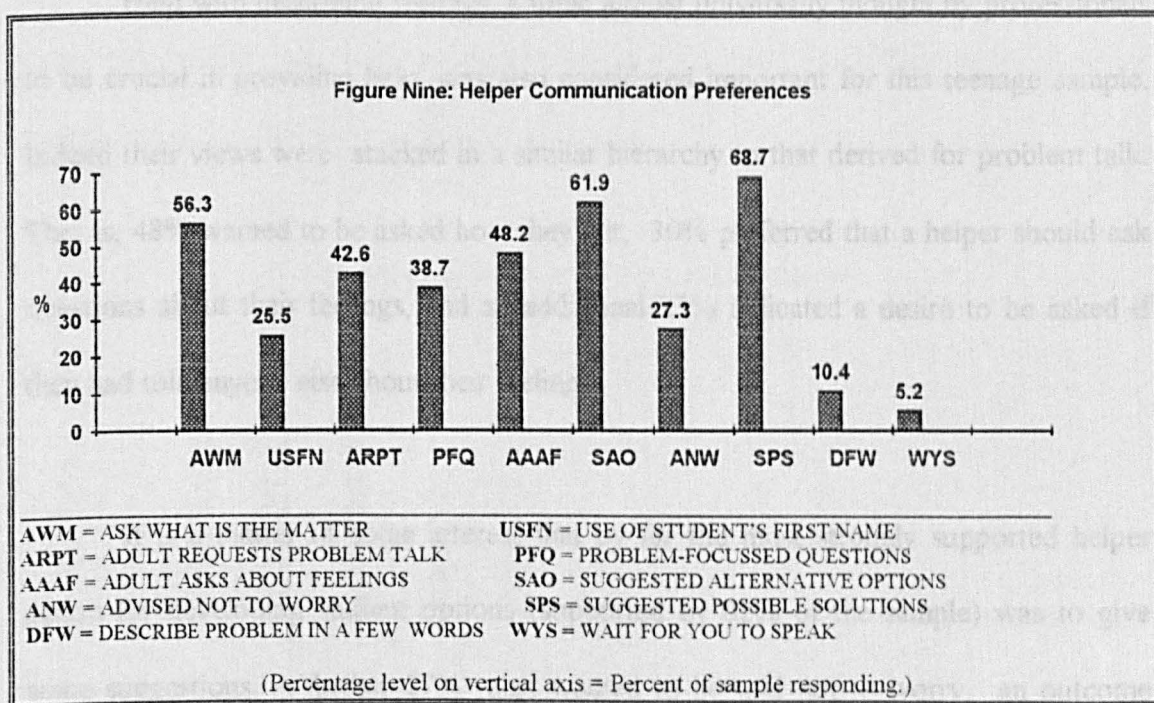


The strongest category of response involved 28% of the respondents, who chose an after-school meeting as their personal preference. There was less support for meeting during lessons, with 15% deciding on this option. Lunch-time meetings were favoured by only 14% of the students. Taken overall, 36% of the sample stated a preference for a meeting during the school day, 39% for a meeting during the day but outside of school hours, with only 5% favouring an evening meeting.

Offered a variety of possible venues to choose from, the favourite meeting place turned out to be in a school office for 42% of the students. In comparison, 19% opted for a classroom, and 10% for their home. School corridors or the library were almost universally out of favour, (receiving support from 3% and 2% respectively). One feature common to classroom, corridor, and library options is that of the increased risk of individual exposure to observation by others, notably peers, which may go some way towards explaining why they were less popular choices.

### Helper communication preferences.

Much of the assistance potentially available from adult helpers in the school system is mediated through a process of verbal communication, and consequently adolescent opinion on this process of considerable interest, since it may offer a formative input which can contribute towards enhanced helper effectiveness, as Figure Nine will next portray:-



By far the greatest proportion of these young adolescents expressed a desire for the person helping them to communicate in an active and problem-focused manner. When asked how they would like a helper to assist them to start talking, 56% of the sample indicated that they should be asked what was the matter. Interestingly, less than half this number (26%) was concerned about being called by their first name, suggesting that it is the nature of the problem which is the more widespread concern.

To gain assistance in describing a personal problem, 43% of the students wanted to be asked specifically to talk about it, compared with only 18.% who simply wanted to be asked if they had a problem. Another 39% indicated that they would like to be asked questions about their problem. Developing a pool of information about the problem may therefore be considered an important task to be accomplished during the helping intervention with adolescent students.

Help with describing feelings, a topic almost universally thought by professionals to be crucial in providing help, was also considered important for this teenage sample. Indeed their views were stacked in a similar hierarchy to that derived for problem talk. That is, 48% wanted to be asked how they felt, 30% preferred that a helper should ask questions about their feelings, and an additional 23% indicated a desire to be asked if they had told anyone else about their feelings.

It is a matter of some interest that by far the most strongly supported helper action for developing student options (supported by 62% of the sample) was to give some suggestions. A further 27% also wanted to be told not to worry, an outcome probably related to the Part One finding that of six potential reactions to a personal problem, worrying, (a form of cognition involving self-statements of anxiety, inability to cope, and other negatively-loaded causal attributions) was reported by the greatest number of survey respondents.

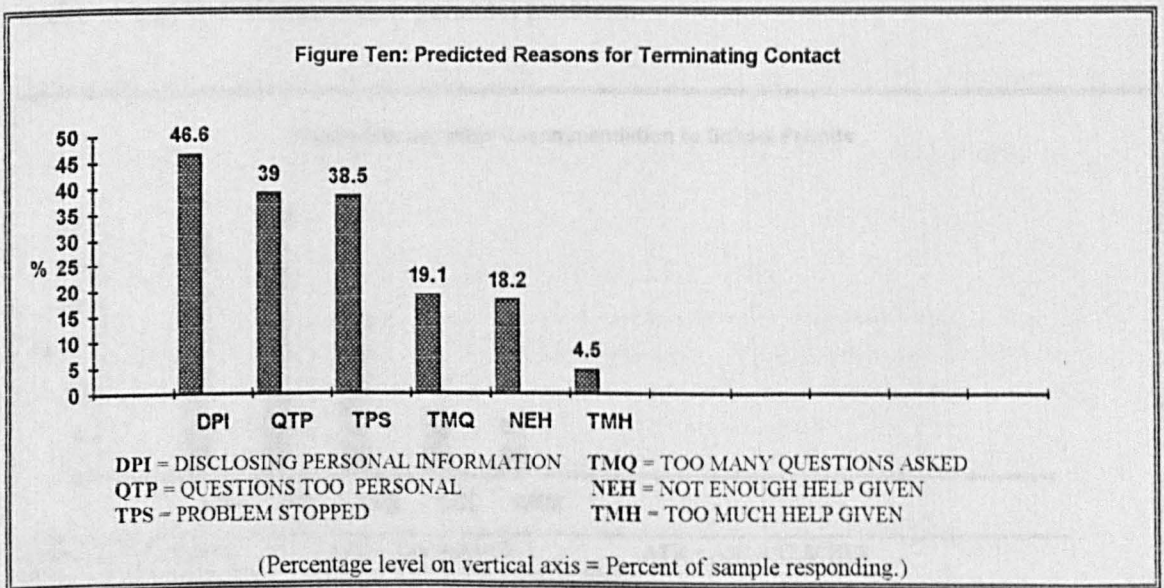
Likewise, in formulating steps towards a problem solution, 69% of those responding indicated that they would like helpers to suggest a solution. Another 20% also wanted to be asked if they knew of a possible solution themselves. Just 10% of the



sample stated that they would like a helper to describe their problem in a few words. Furthermore, only 5% wanted a helper to wait for them to speak first, suggesting that the notion of shared silence may not hold high validity for students of secondary age.

Predicted reasons for terminating contact.

The likely reasons why adolescents may terminate contact with a helper form another important professional consideration in secondary schools, and these are outlined in Figure Ten which follows:-

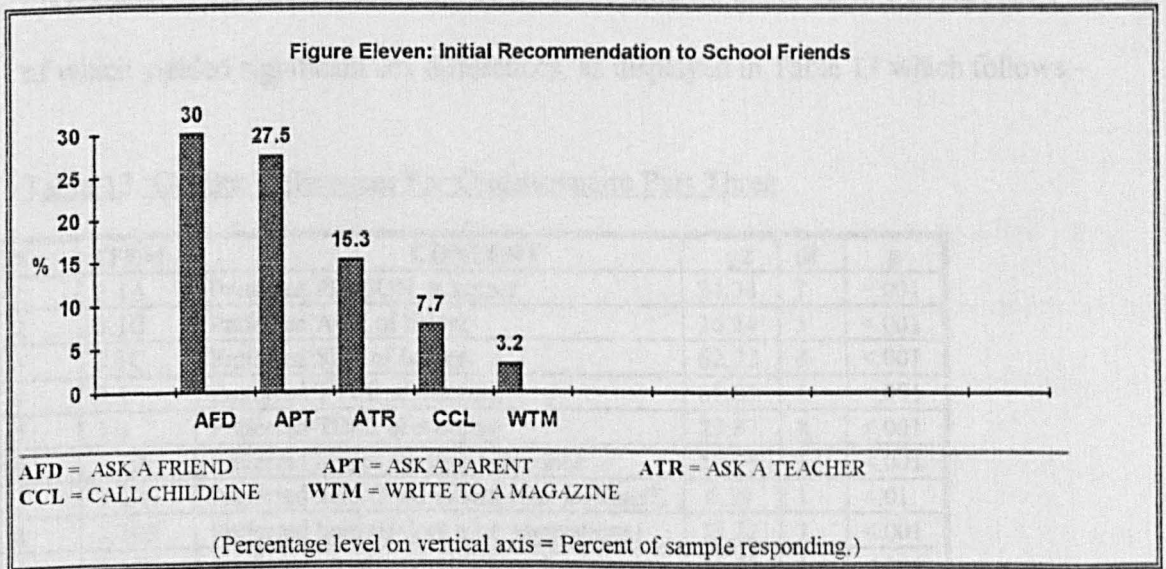


Almost 47% of the sample stated that they would stop seeing an adult helper who told someone else what they had said, suggesting that trust is an important issue for this age group. Another 39% added that they would terminate contact if their helper asked questions that were too personal, and 19% cited being asked too many questions, so that some students may be sensitive to being interrogated. However, it is of equal interest that almost an identical proportion of the student sample, (39%) cited the

problem stopping as another reason for breaking off contact with a helper in school, an outcome which reiterates the problem-focus of adolescent help-seeking behaviour. Being given either too much or too little help were additional reasons for terminating contact, options which were checked by 18% and 5% of the sample respectively.

Recommendation to school friends.

An alternative index of what students value in helping contexts is shown in Figure Eleven, which displays choices provided in relation to the advice that they would first make to a school friend with a personal problem.



The hierarchy of preferences for the first three items of Figure 11 provides the greatest level support for friends and parents as sources of assistance with personal problems, an outcome which provides cross-validation for the same trend in Figure 7 above. However, the percentage favouring the friend option is markedly lower, (30% here, versus 57% in Figure 7) reducing the number of students stating this preference by

almost a half. This suggests the possibility that self-interest may be influential in deciding what to do when faced with personal problems. The level of support for parent assistance registers very little change in this table (28% compared with 25% for Figure 7) however, support for teacher assistance appears stronger (15% against 2% In Figure 7) when considering the needs of friends.

### Analysis of Main Variables For Questionnaire Part Three

#### Gender Differences

Part Three of the questionnaire enabled respondents to make up to 51 responses, seven of which yielded significant sex differences, as displayed in Table 13 which follows:-

Table 13: Gender Differences For Questionnaire Part Three

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	3.1A	Preferred PERSON as helper	24.34	7	<.001
2	3.1B	Preferred AGE of helper	26.44	5	<.001
3	3.1C	Preferred SEX of helper	62.72	3	<.001
4	3.4	Preferred TYPE of meeting	61.63	5	<.001
5	3.6	Preferred TIME of meeting	29.87	8	<.001
6	3.7B	Preferred helper starting behaviour	11.63	1	<.001
7	3.9D	Preferred help (Told others your feelings?)	6.39	1	<.01
8	3.10B	Preferred help (Helper give suggestions)	13.22	1	<.001
9	3.12H	Predicted termination (Helper disclosure)	15.72	1	<.001

Relatively high frequency of responding for males, in this part of the questionnaire, (which dealt with the personal preferences of secondary students) occurred first in terms of greater support for parents as helpers (item 3.1A) . Double the number of males to females supported this particular choice. More boys also favoured the idea of a helper being a lot older (item 3.1B), and supported the option of an opposite sex helper (item

3.1C). Finally, more males preferred to meet a teacher helping them alone (item 3.4) and meetings scheduled during morning break or after school (item 3.6). Significantly more male adolescents wanted to be asked what was the matter (item 3.7B).

Females outnumbered males on a smaller range of issues. The first of these relates to the choice of helper in that more girls proposed a friend (item 3.1A). Similarly, more girls preferred someone a little older (item 3.1B), and greater female support emerged for a same-sex helper (item 3.1C). Other options in which female responses formed the majority were in wanting to be asked if they had told anyone else about their feelings (item 3.9D) and in helpers giving them some suggestions (item 3.10B). Female numbers were significantly higher in preferring to meet either before school or at lunchtime (item 3.6); also in giving helper disclosure to a third party as a reason for terminating contact.

In Part Three of the questionnaire, differences at the required level of significance occurred in nine out of 51 response options. Hence it is apparent that significant gender differences occurred in only a minor proportion of the items responded to, indicating considerable agreement between male and female respondents.

### Year Group Differences

For Part Three of the questionnaire, eight items generated significant differences across year-groups, and these are shown in Table 14 below:-

Table 14: Year Group Differences For Questionnaire Part Three.

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	3.1	Choice of Helper	7.83	2	<.02
2	3.2	Preferred choice amongst teachers	22.67	10	<.01
3	3.4	Mode of meeting with helper	25.72	10	<.01
4	3.10B	Preferred helper suggesting options	17.15	2	<.001
5	3.11B	Preferred helper suggesting a solution	10.84	2	<.01
6	3.12H	Reason for termination	14.22	2	<.001
7	3.13	Recommendation to a friend	32.85	12	<.001

Given a choice of formal and informal helpers, significantly more students from Year Eight preferred help from one of their own parents (item 3.1G). Presented with a forced choice between teachers, more Year Eight students also favoured a Head of Year (item 3.2) than students from other year groups. Likewise, more students from Year 8 showed a preference for meeting a helper in the company of a parent (item 3.4). More Year Eight students also said that they would advise a friend with a personal problem to call Childline (item 3.13). Significantly fewer Year Eight students favoured having the helper suggest some options for handling a problem (item 3.10B). There was no instance in which Year 9 students responded significantly more frequently than students in other year groups in Part Three of the questionnaire.

Significantly more students from Year 10 supported the idea of receiving help from someone of their own age, and for asking a Subject Teacher for help (item 3.2C). Also more Year 10 respondents favoured meeting a helper on their own (item 3.4); and the helper suggesting a solution (item 3.11B). The idea of terminating contact if the helper told someone else what had been said (item 3.12H) was lent support by significantly more students from Year 10. A further difference was that more Year 10 students favoured the option of asking a friend or asking a teacher (item 3.13) when choosing the advice they would give to a friend. Significantly fewer Year Ten students



nominated a parent as their helper of first choice but there was no significant change in the number of citations for friends as helpers (item 3.1A). Similarly, fewer Year Ten students indicated that they wanted to meet a helper accompanied by a friend (item 3.4C)

### School Differences

Across Part Three of the questionnaire, three differences between schools were registered out of a total of 51 multiple-choices provided. Table 15 below provides the relevant data:-

Table 15: School Differences For Questionnaire Part Three.

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	3.5	Location of meeting	45.20	25	<.01
2	3.6	Timing of meeting	87.02	40	<.001
3	3.8E	Helper assistance (Problem talk)	17.09	5	<.01

School One students prove to respond at the required level of significance more often than their counterparts in citing lunchtime for meeting a helper (item 3.6). School Two respondents gave strongest levels of support to meeting with a helper before school (item 3.6) and in a classroom (item 3.5). Where a significant differences occurred at or beyond the .01 level in Part Three, there was no instance in which students from either School Three or School Four outnumbered students from the other schools.

School Five students gave most support to selecting the school library as a meeting location (item 3.5) and for lessons and morning break for meeting a helper

(item 3.6). School Six students opted more than those in any other school for meeting in a school office or in a corridor, (item 3.5). However, 10 times as many expressed the former preference. More School Six students opted for meeting a helper either after school or in the evening, (item 3.6) with the stipulation that more than 4 times the number of these students preferred the after-school option than chose the evening. Once again, there were relatively few significant differences between schools for this part of the questionnaire.

### Location Differences

For Part Three of the questionnaire, only one significant difference occurred on the Location variable, and this is recorded in Table 16 which follows:-

Table 16: Location Differences For Questionnaire Part Three

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	3.6	Timing of meeting	35.24	8	<.001

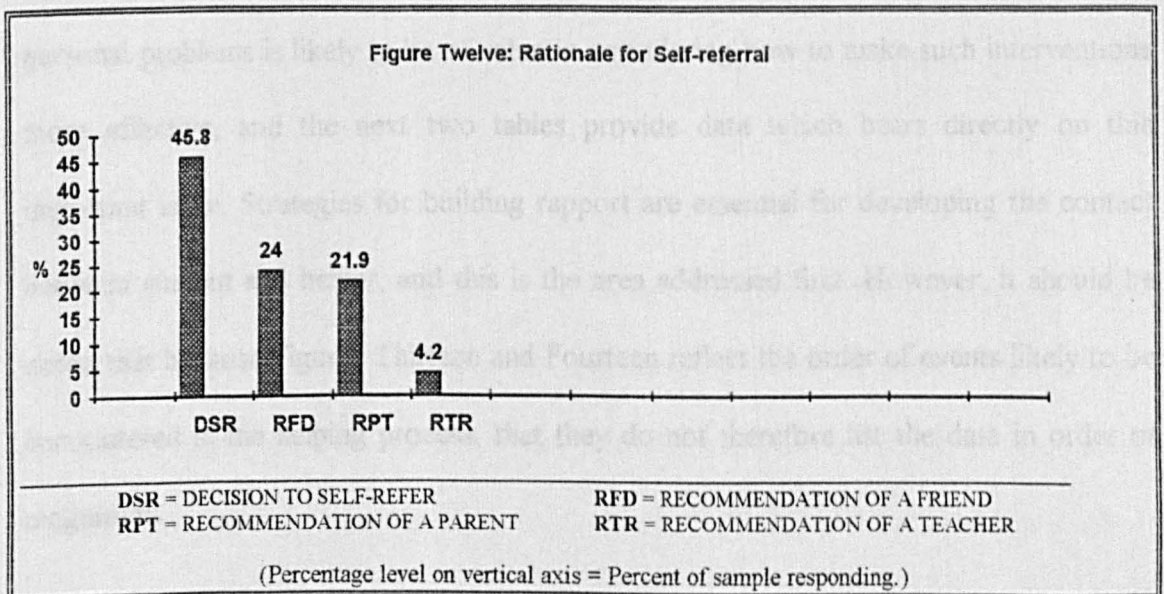
In this case, it was the issue of when to meet with a helper (item 3.6) that gave rise to the difference between rural and urban students. The latter were in the majority who favoured meeting during lessons, meeting in the evening, during morning break, or after school. However, the small proportion of significant differences involved attests to a high level of agreement between rural and urban students in terms of their reported preferences for help in school.

## Questionnaire Results Part Four: Experience Of Teacher Help

### Overall Differences

#### Rationale for seeking help.

Part Four of the questionnaire was completed by the 18% of the student sample who responded in Part Two that they had received teacher assistance with a personal problem. Findings for this part of the questionnaire are reported as a percentage of the randomly selected N=96 students responding. The adolescent rationale for seeking teacher assistance with a personal problem is provided in Figure Twelve below:-



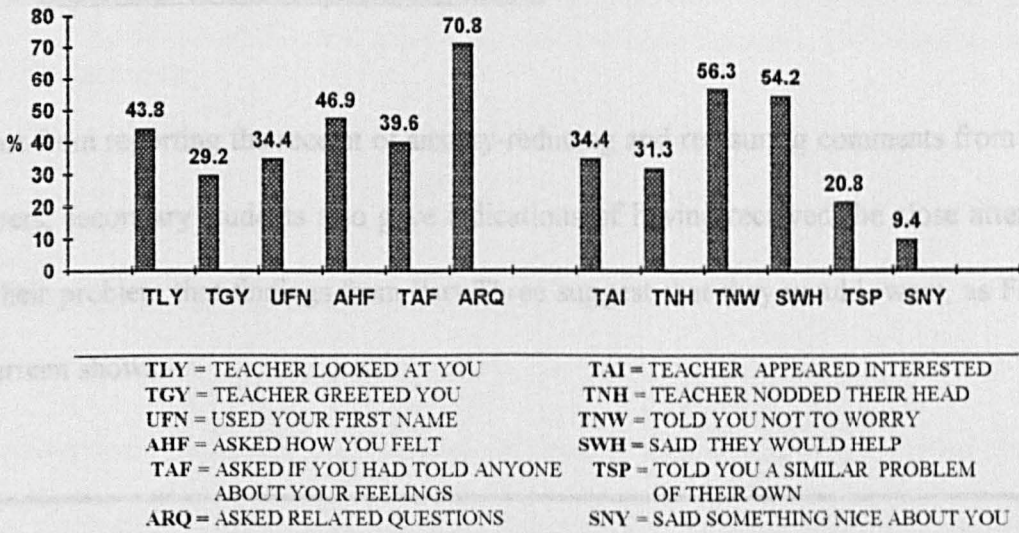
Extending the findings from Part One of the questionnaire, here further evidence is emerging of secondary students' inclination to take personal responsibility for their

problems, since almost 46% indicated deciding to seek help of their own volition. A further 24% of the sample stated that they did so because a friend said they should, and another 22% took this action on the basis of parental advice. Referral on the basis of teacher recommendation was undertaken by a mere 4% of the students. Consequently, the influence exercised by either friends and parents alone appears to be substantially more widespread in this age-group (by a factor of 5) than that of teachers. When taken together, friend and parent -initiated referrals accounted for virtually 46% of the total, almost identical with the level of support for self-referral, which was the single most influential variable.

#### Experience of teacher attention.

The adolescent perspective on what happens when they are in receipt of help with personal problems is likely to be of value in considering how to make such interventions more effective, and the next two tables provide data which bears directly on this important issue. Strategies for building rapport are essential for developing the contact between student and helper, and this is the area addressed first. However, it should be noted that because Figures Thirteen and Fourteen reflect the order of events likely to be encountered in the helping process, that they do not therefore list the data in order of magnitude.

Figure Thirteen: Experience of Teacher Rapport



TLY = TEACHER LOOKED AT YOU  
 TGY = TEACHER GREETED YOU  
 UFN = USED YOUR FIRST NAME  
 AHF = ASKED HOW YOU FELT  
 TAF = ASKED IF YOU HAD TOLD ANYONE ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS  
 ARQ = ASKED RELATED QUESTIONS  
 TAI = TEACHER APPEARED INTERESTED  
 TNH = TEACHER NODDED THEIR HEAD  
 TNW = TOLD YOU NOT TO WORRY  
 SWH = SAID THEY WOULD HELP  
 TSP = TOLD YOU A SIMILAR PROBLEM OF THEIR OWN  
 SNY = SAID SOMETHING NICE ABOUT YOU

(Percentage level on vertical axis = Percent of sample responding.)

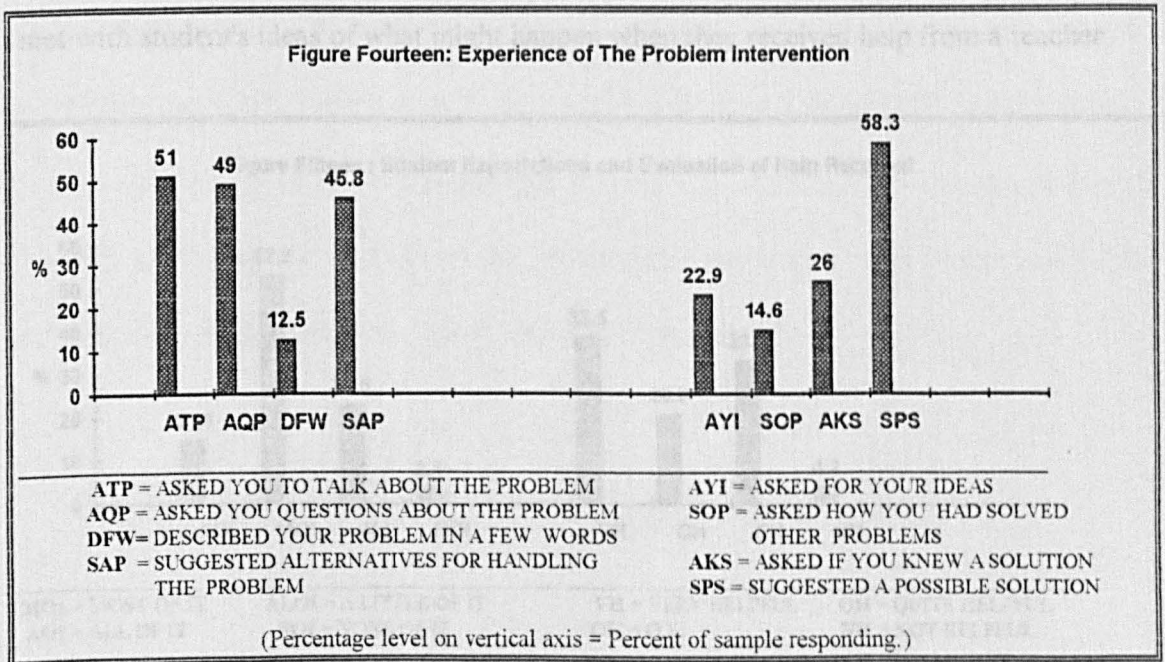
Figure Thirteen shows that 44% of the sample recorded that teachers looked at them, 29% reported that teachers greeted them, and 34% of the students said that they were called by their first name. A further 47% indicated that teachers had asked how they felt, and 40% that teachers had enquired whether they had told anyone else about their feelings. Close to 70% of the sample noted that they had been asked related questions.

In 34% of the instances, students stated that their teachers had looked interested, and in 31% that teachers had nodded their heads while they were talking to them. In addition, 56% had been told not to worry and just over a half of the students (54%) recorded that teachers said they would help. Almost 21% of the students indicated that teachers had told them about a similar problem of their own, and 9% reported that their teachers had said something nice about them.



Experience of The Helping Intervention.

Apart from reporting the receipt of anxiety-reducing and reassuring comments from their helpers, secondary students also gave indications of having received the close attention to their problem that findings from Part Three suggest that they would want, as Figure Fourteen shows:-

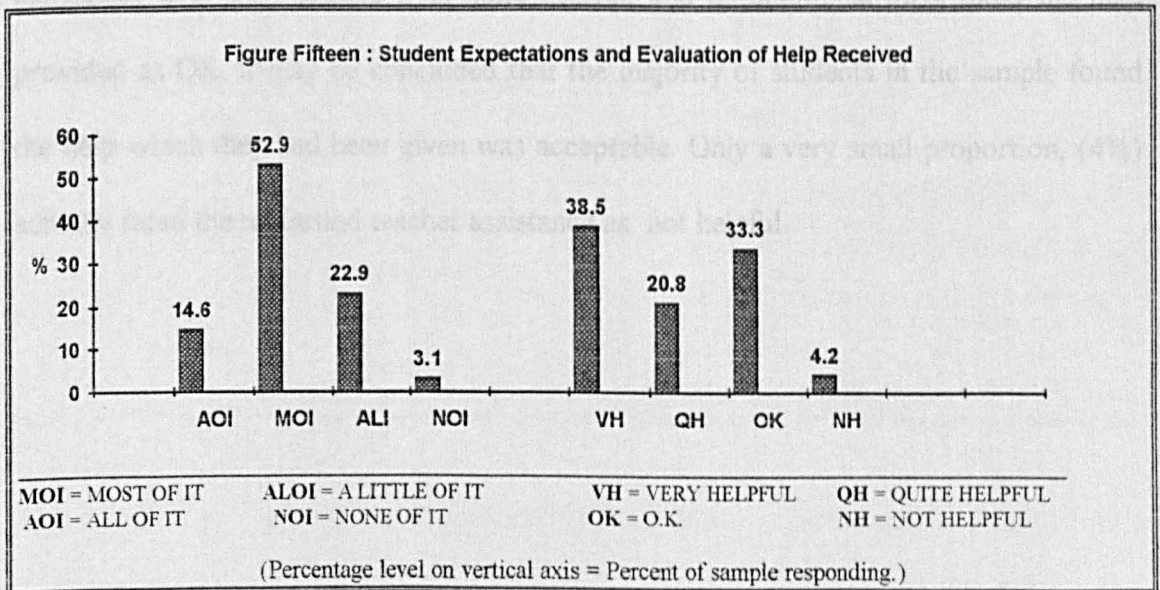


Virtually one half of the responding adolescents attested to relevant problem-focused support from their teacher, 51% in the form of requests to describe the problem, and 49% via problem-related questions. Only 13% reported that teachers had described their problem in a few words, which suggests that attempts to paraphrase students' accounts of their difficulties were not common. However, 46% of the sample recorded that their teachers had suggested alternatives for handling the problem discussed. For 23% of those responding, teachers had asked for their ideas. Likewise, 15% enquired

how they had solved other problems, and 26% asked if they knew of a solution for their current problem. More than double this number reported that teachers had suggested possible solutions.

Expectation and evaluation of help received.

The next array, Figure Fifteen, provides an index of how far the help provided actually met with student's ideas of what might happen when they received help from a teacher.



When asked how much of the help that they had been given was the kind of help they expected, 15% of the students felt that all of the teacher assistance provided met expectations, which, when combined with the further 53% who reported that most of the help received had met this criterion, show that two thirds of the sample had the majority of their expectations met, since the data in this table represent discrete groups of students. A further 23% indicated that a little of the help given was as they expected, but only a very small minority (3%) stated that none of it was. While the

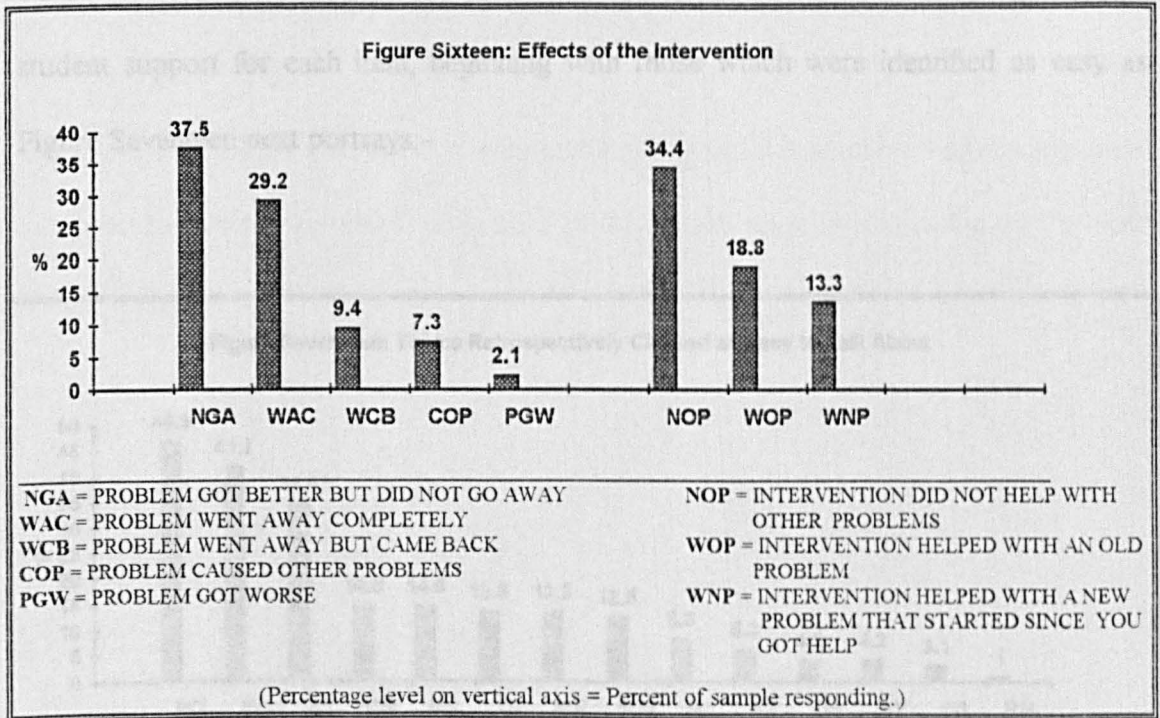
above findings suggest that some level of information regarding the helping process was available to students in the schools concerned prior to the time when the assistance was received, it appears however, that around a quarter of them did not get their expectations fulfilled.

Apart from the issue of whether the helping intervention was in accord with students' expectations, a further question probed for information on respondents' perceptions of effectiveness regarding the help that they had received. Given that almost 39% evaluated teacher assistance as having been very helpful, marginally over 20% judged it as quite helpful, and an additional 33% rated the help provided as OK, it may be concluded that the majority of students in the sample found the help which they had been given was acceptable. Only a very small proportion, (4%) actually rated the requested teacher assistance as not helpful.



### Effects of the intervention.

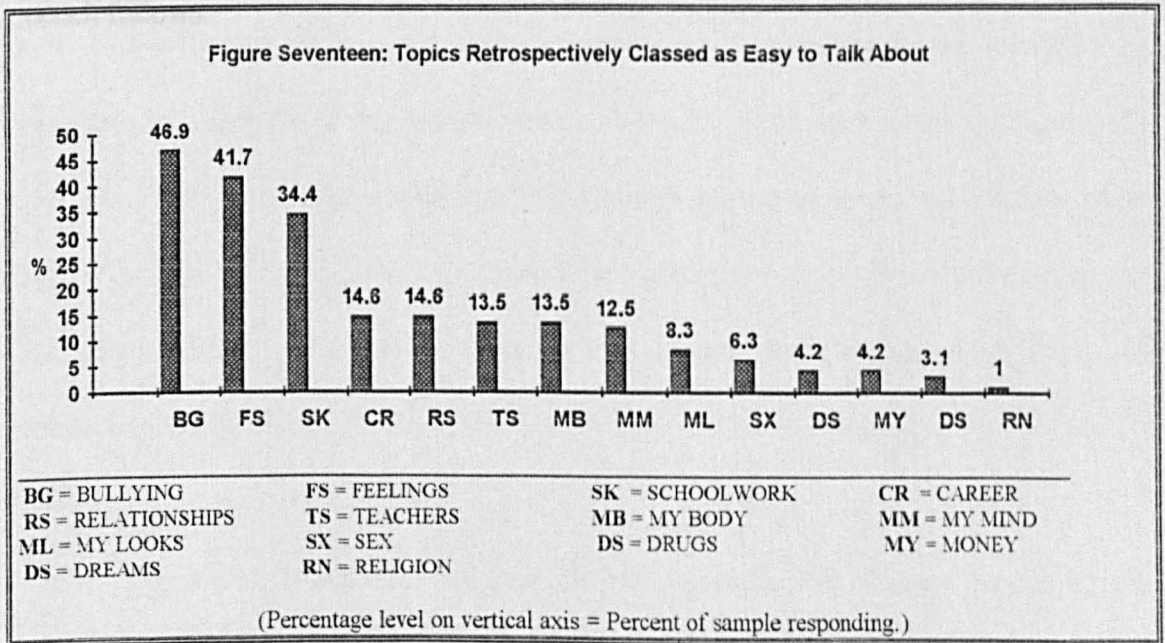
No less important than the evaluation assigned by students to the help that they received, is the issue of its after-effects, and data pertinent to this issue is shown in Figure Sixteen below:-



In order of magnitude, 38% of those who had received help from a teacher reported that the problem got better even if it did not go away altogether, and a further 29% found that it went away completely. Since these were discrete response categories, it therefore follows that two thirds of these students obtained some relief from their problem. However, for 9% the original problem came back, for 7% it caused other problems, and for 2% it actually got worse. A related question was that of how far the help provided also assisted the students in coping with other problems. Here, 34% of those responding said that it did *not* help with other problems, 19% said that it helped with an *old* problem, and 13% indicated that it helped with a *new* problem.

Topics classed as easy to talk about.

Respondents were also asked to indicate which topics they found easy to talk about, and which topics they found hard. The results are displayed in order of the magnitude of student support for each item, beginning with those which were identified as easy as Figure Seventeen next portrays:-



The easy topics may be differentiated into three main groups. The first of these includes talking about bullying, feelings, and schoolwork, all items supported by over a third of the sample. The second group included talking about career, relationships, teachers, my body, and my mind, items which were only poorly supported, by between 13% and 15% of the students. The third group, right on the bottom end of the scale, and each accounting for less than 10% of the respondents, included talking about looks, sex,

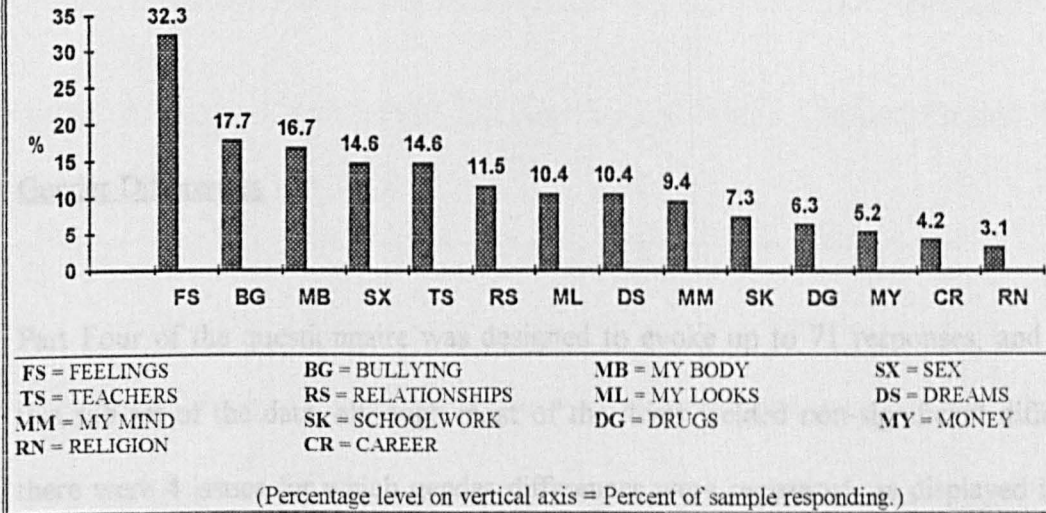
drugs, money, dreams, and religion. Hence it appears that issues of immediate personal value in the school setting are those which most of these secondary students found easy to discuss with their teachers.

#### Topics classed as hard to talk about.

The other half of this question concerns those issues which secondary students identified retrospectively as items which were hard to talk about, as is shown in Figure Eighteen which follows:-



Figure Eighteen: Topics Retrospectively Classified as Hard to Talk About



This time it is apparent that only one item (my feelings) was identified by anything like a third of the sample, compared with three such items in Figure 17. However, as in the previous table, six items (though not the same six) were supported by less than 10% of the sample. An intermediate group of seven options (bullying, my body, sex, teachers, relationships, my looks, and dreams) were supported by 10-18% of those responding.

The logical prediction that one of the preceding two figures should be the complete reverse of the other is clearly not borne out by the data. Although the topics of my feelings and bullying constituted the first two ranks in Figures 17 and 18, their positions reversed with regard to each other, and religion gained least support as an easy topic but also least support as a hard one. A significant difference in the overall rankings was nonetheless obtained ( $p = <.05$ ; 2-tailed test) using Spearman's rank-order correlation, with the largest item differences occurring for career, school-work, dreams, and sex.

## Analysis of Main Variables For Questionnaire Part Four

### Gender Differences

Part Four of the questionnaire was designed to evoke up to 71 responses, and within this sub-set of the data, although most of the items yielded non-significant differences, there were 4 issues for which gender differences were registered, as displayed in Table 17 that follows:-

Table 17: Gender Differences For Questionnaire Part Four.

No	ITEM	CONTENT	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	4.2C	Teacher use of students' first name	7.22	1	<.01
2	4.8C	Teacher focus on solutions	7.56	1	<.01
3	4.13A	Topic easy to talk about	8.29	1	<.01
4	4.13N	Topic hard to talk about	7.92	1	<.01

Male responses were predominant against items which involved being called by their first name (item 4.2C) as was being asked how they had solved other problems (item 4.8C). Significantly more male students also rated bullying as having been easy to talk about (item 4.13A).

The one category in which female students predominated was that more of them rated feelings as being easy to talk about (item 4.13A). Since the female respondents account for almost two-thirds of the sub-group responding to that item, this may reflect an elevated level of female interest or awareness of affective issues. Further data on

gender differences in student perception regarding talking about feelings is presented in Table 18 below:-

Table 18: Gender Differences In The Number Of Students Checking Feelings As Both Easy And Hard To Talk About.

Number of Male Students	Number of Female Students	Student Total
3	7	10

It can be seen from the above data that just over twice as many females as males indicated that feelings were both easy and hard to talk about. However, the total of 10 students who responded in this manner constituted less than 2% of the sample, and cannot therefore be considered representative.

The small number of significant gender differences recorded again speaks to a relatively high stability of response across the sexes for this part of the questionnaire.

#### Year Group Differences

As in Part Two of the results, no significant differences on the age variable emerged throughout Part Four of the questionnaire data, once again demonstrating a very high level of agreement between the age-groups. This finding is interpreted as one which underlines the importance of the overall outcomes already reported for this part of the

questionnaire, which lend general support for empathic and active teacher behaviours in the context of providing help for students with personal problems.

### School Differences

Only two items produced school differences at the required level of significance in Part Four of the questionnaire, as displayed in Table 19 below:-

Table 19: School Differences For Questionnaire Part Four.

No	ITEM	CONTENT	X <sup>2</sup>	df	p
2.	4.13C	Easy topics (RELATIONSHIPS)	11.51	5	<.01
4.	4.13H	Easy topics (MONEY)	12.78	5	<.01

Adolescents from Schools One, Four, Five, and Six did not predominate in any of the items for which significant differences arose in the above table, and therefore discussion of the results for individual schools will commence with School Two. Students from School Two were in the majority in nominating relationships as having been a topic that was hard to discuss (item 4.13C). School Three students gave the most support to money having been an easy topic to discuss (item 4.13H). As with Age Differences, the overwhelming feature of this part of the data analysis is the very high level of agreement between schools in terms of the students' experience of receiving help for personal problems in school.

### Location Differences

No differences were recorded on the location variable at the required level of significance, again pointing up the high level of agreement between students, although this time across rural and urban settings.

### Summary Of Main Survey Findings

Part One of this survey (N=540) produced strongest support for the view that young to mid- adolescents prefer to spend time with their friends rather than with their family or being alone. While the number of personal problems recorded ranged from 0-11, the majority of students reported having only a few personal problems that they would be likely to need help with. They tended to worry about such problems as they did have, but nonetheless attempted to deal with these themselves; and reported that they had already solved some of their problems. Between 33% and 52% reported that they would be likely to need help with problems related to their career, schoolwork, relationships, money, and their feelings. According to which of the 14 specified problem items was selected, 33% to 80% of the sample recorded that they would be unlikely to need help.

Part Two of the survey (N=540) indicated that most of the sample recognised that help was available in school and amongst the identifiable adults would favour their Form Tutor as a helper. The vast majority of these secondary students indicated that they had neither wanted nor asked for help for personal problems in school, and accordingly,



just over 80% of them recorded that they had not received such help, with 18% conversely stating that they had received help.

Part Three findings (N=444) highlighted a utilitarian helper profile as being one involving a personal friend of the same age and the same sex, in comparison with which less than 4% of the respondents favoured a professional helper. Most of the students said that they wanted to refer themselves to a helper, with less than 1% supporting referral by a teacher. A one-to-one, face-to-face meeting was the preferred mode of contact. Written or telephone contact received support from less than 7% of this group of adolescents. The single most popular time for meeting a helper was after school hours. Most of the sample wanted helpers to ask them about both their problems and their feelings, also to provide assistance in working out their options and in creating possible solutions. Termination of helper contact was most frequently predicted where another person was told about what students had said.

Part Four outcomes (N=96) reiterated that the strongest level of support (46%) was in favour of self-referral for help with personal problems in school. Most of those responding also indicated that the teacher providing assistance had not only asked about their problems and their feelings, but had also told them not to worry, and said that they would help. Moreover, the help offered had included suggesting some possible solutions to the referred problem. The greatest proportion of the sample (67%) additionally reported that all or most of the help given was in accord with what they expected; just over 90% rated the help as either O.K., quite helpful, or very helpful; and for most students (67%) the problem with which they had been helped then got better. (Less than 10% reported sequelae such as the problem getting worse or causing other problems.)

Around a third of these adolescents (32%) indicated that the help received had also assisted them with other problems. Topics classed as easy to talk about by 33% or more of the sample included bullying, feelings, and schoolwork, whereas a comparable level of support for hard topics was encountered only in respect of bullying.

To determine whether any particular main variable would be more effective than the others in predicting the results obtained, the data from age, sex, school, and location variables were examined using the SPSS linear regression option. This analysis yielded non-significant results. Therefore it appeared that no single main variable had contributed a significantly greater effect to the survey findings than had the others.

## Part B : Results For The Experimental Phase of The Research

Data analysis for the experimental phase of the research was set up to evaluate the effect of the treatment interventions upon student self-esteem scores. Means and standard deviations in the self-esteem scores for Personal Emphasis (PET) and Educational Emphasis (EET) groups are displayed for reference in Table 20 below:-

Table 20: Pre- and Post-Treatment Self-esteem Score Means and Standard Deviations

	Pre-Treatment Mean	Pre-Treatment S.D.	Post-Treatment Mean	Post-Treatment S.D.
PET Group	11.85	4.18	11.45	4.63
EET Group	6.15	3.30	6.30	3.44

It can be seen that the PET group exhibited markedly higher pre-treatment mean scores than the EET group. The recorded difference was significant at the  $p < .001$  level ( $t$  for independent samples = 4.79; one-tailed test, 58 df). This finding makes rejection of the first research hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) apposite. (This hypothesis posited that adolescents receiving Personal Emphasis Treatment may have lower initial self-esteem scores than peers receiving an Educational Emphasis Treatment.) The data effectively disqualify any suggestion that the adolescents seeking help with a personal problem had lower initial self-esteem scores. Because of significant between-group differences, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was also rejected. Initial self-esteem scores did not differ significantly between the sexes.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model was specified for the purpose of investigating variation in the self-esteem scores which were recorded before and after the treatment intervention. The application of an ANCOVA model is deemed

appropriate when the within-group correlations between the dependent variable and the covariate is greater than  $r = 0.60$  (Ferguson & Takane, 1989). For the present data-set, the Pearson product-moment correlation was  $r = 0.93$ , which clearly met the application criterion.

Both the treatment group and the sex of the participants were entered as main effects in the model, and a two-way interaction was examined between these effects. The level of self-esteem recorded prior to the treatment intervention was entered as a covariate, and the post-treatment self-esteem score was entered as the dependent variable. The chief objective was to examine the effects of the treatment intervention on the dependent variable, while controlling for the effects of the pre-treatment self-esteem scores. The ANCOVA procedure operates by removing the influence of the covariate using a linear regression technique. An analysis of variance is then applied to the residuals, and tests for significant differences between them. Covariate, main, and interaction effects are each adjusted for all other effects, such as those of the preceding type within the model (SPSS Inc., 1994).

**Table 21: Analysis of Covariance on Pre- and Post-Intervention Self-Esteem Scores**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
<b>Covariates</b>	390.834	1	390.834	124.508	.000
SCORE BEFORE	390.834	1	390.834	124.508	.000
<b>Main Effects</b>	4.463	2	2.231	.711	.498
TREATMENT GROUP	.956	1	.956	.304	.585
SEX	3.189	1	3.189	1.016	.320
<b>2-Way Interactions</b>	.034	1	.034	.011	.918
GROUP x SEX	.034	1	.034	.011	.918
<b>Explained</b>	786.509	4	196.627	62.640	.000
<b>Residual</b>	109.866	35	3.139		
<b>Total</b>	896.375	39	22.934		

A key issue to be addressed is that of how far the PET and EET groups' final self-esteem scores were influenced by the treatments to which they were exposed. The above table displays the relevant output from the ANCOVA. Table 21 shows that the one variable significantly related to post-treatment outcome was that of the students' self-esteem score immediately prior to the experimental intervention ( $p < .001$ ). The table also reveals that this single variable explains the majority of the variance in the sums of squares. Hence it appears that no specific treatment predicted the level of self-esteem after the intervention had been completed, and that adult assistance with a personal problem did not therefore worsen students' self-esteem. Accordingly, the hypothesis labelled  $H_3$  was rejected. ( $H_3$  held that post-treatment self-esteem scores may be lower for the group receiving Personal Emphasis Treatment than for peers receiving an alternative educational treatment, due to a threat-to-self esteem effect.) Because of the theoretical importance of this finding, multiple regression was employed to predict and cross-validate treatment effects. Results of a simultaneous multiple regression analysis are displayed in Table 22 below:-

**Table 22: Multiple Regression for Predicting Treatment Effects**

VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION					
VARIABLE	B	SE B	BETA	T	SIG T
GROUP	-.463601	1.611741	-.048967	-.288	.7754
GROUP x BEFORE	-.009854	.172930	-.013717	-.057	.9549
SEX	1.615235	1.312776	.170605	1.230	.2270
SEX x BEFORE	-.249265	.135052	-.258550	-1.846	.0737
BEFORE	1.053432	.136758	1.034233	7.703	.0000
CONSTANT	-.051483	.921914		-.056	.9558

Multiple regression is used to estimate the likely score on a criterion measure (in this case post-treatment self-esteem) from one or more predictors, and can determine the minimum number of predictors needed to explain variation in the criterion scores (Cramer, 1994). Precedents for the use of multiple regression in research on adolescence can be found, for example, in the work of Friedman et al (1991); Engen et al (1988); and Windle (1994). In the context of the present study, Table 22 confirms that the one variable predicting the level of student self-esteem following treatment is their pre-treatment self-esteem score ( $p < .0005$ ).

It is now necessary to take the overall finding for the two treatment groups further, by considering data which bears further upon the Fisher et al (1983) threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis. It may be recalled that this hypothesis, (labelled as H<sub>2</sub> in Chapter Three) predicted that students with the highest levels of self-esteem would be those most at risk for experiencing reduced self-esteem in helping situations. Accordingly, a median split of initial self-esteem scores was carried out, and data on the magnitude of difference-scores (highest scorers versus lowest scorers) was analysed using post-treatment scores as the dependent variable.

Table 23 : Multiple Regression For Predicting Self-esteem Difference Scores

VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION					
Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
GROUP	.635514	.903425	.186292	.703	.4866
HIGH SCORERS	.819801	1.254130	.239109	.654	.5177
HIGH x SEX	-.769422	1.122675	-.180437	-.685	.4978
SEX	-.464953	.760346	-.136295	-.612	.5449
HIGH GROUP	-2.031347	1.424468	-.576554	-1.426	.1630
CONSTANT	.336449	.547051		.615	.5426

Table 23 reveals no significant outcomes from this analysis, a finding which demonstrates that changes in the final self-esteem status of the students could not be predicted from their membership of highest or lowest scoring groups. Implications of this and other experimental phase findings will be considered (following those of the survey phase) in the discussion presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

“The ways in which young people understand and perceive themselves, their own agency and personality, and their various social situations have a powerful effect on their subsequent reactions to various life events.” (Coleman & Hendry, 1990: 45.)



## Introduction

### Study Scope and Sequence

Using survey and experimental methodology with a stratified random sample of students from six secondary schools in the North of England, this study set out to answer five main questions. These questions asked:-

1. How adolescents viewed their own approach to solving personal problems.
2. How they perceived the helping resources of their school.
3. What were their preferences for help-seeking situations.
4. What was their experience of getting help in school.
5. How far exposure to help was a threat to their self-esteem.

The first four questions were addressed in the survey phase of the research, and the fifth question in the experimental phase. Discussion of the reported findings will consider each of the above issues in numerical order, and will be presented in five main sections, which correspond firstly with the four parts of the questionnaire survey and then with the experimental investigation.

To introduce the first four main sections of the discussion, findings from each appropriate part of the questionnaire will be summarised in the form of a representative student profile. These student profiles are derived from the modal number of responses made against items included in the relevant part of the questionnaire. In addition to reviewing the findings of the present investigation, the discussion that follows will also include reference to findings from the research literature as they become appropriate.

### Self-Report Issues

The survey phase of the research is based upon self-report data. A brief comment on the value of self-report material seems warranted, since Eisenberg (1983) has expressed a theoretical concern about the accuracy of self-reports, on the grounds that answers may be unduly influenced by social desirability. However, while in certain situations this might be regarded as a valid concern, such an assertion may not be universally applicable. Indeed, in an empirical analysis of this issue, Achenbach and Edelbrock (1987) demonstrated that self-reports from adolescents could be both valid and reliable. Moreover, in the present study, students' answers were written anonymously under examination conditions, to control social interaction and peer influence. The resulting self-report data are therefore considered to be less vulnerable to social desirability effects than those obtained for example through interview or group discussion. For the reasons stated above, data from the present study are believed to provide a viable index of adolescent preferences and reported experience in help-seeking situations.

### Demographic Summary

The reported results are derived from a sample of N=540 male and female secondary school students attending years eight, nine and ten in neighbourhood secondary schools. The sample ranged in age from 12-15 years, with an average age of 14 years 4 months. Approximately 49% of the students came from the families of skilled workers, 26% from professional or managerial households, and 24% from the homes of semi- or unskilled workers.

## Discussion of The Part One Findings on Personal Information

### Student Profile:

*A representative secondary school student prefers to spend their time with friends rather than with their family, and in general thinks that he or she has few personal problems. However, where problems exist that are likely to need help, these most probably involve concerns about their career, schoolwork, relationships, money, feelings, or looks, in that order of priority.*

*Recognising that he or she has already solved some personal problems without help, the student's mode of coping with a further problem is likely to involve worrying about it initially, and later endeavouring to create a solution for it independently. Accordingly, the student regards it as improbable that he or she would need help with any of the 14 problem categories listed in Part One of the questionnaire. Attempts to avoid a personal problem, laugh it off, or more emotive reactions such as getting angry or crying are very unlikely to be adopted.*

### Social Orientation

Providing information about the context in which adolescent problem-solving seems likely to arise, in excess of 90% of the students reported that they preferred to spend their time in the company of others. Moreover, a preference for spending time with friends was indicated over four times more frequently than spending time with their own family, and fourteen times more often than spending time alone. This pattern was unaffected by age or gender differences. On the basis of this preference hierarchy, it might be expected that secondary students commonly involve friends or parents (particularly their friends) in addressing personal problems.

### Number Of Problems

Most students did not believe themselves to be overwhelmed with personal problems. There was no repeat of a peak in the perceived level of problems at around 14 years of age reported by Porteous (1985). Indeed, no significant difference occurred on this variable in any year group. The divergence in findings may possibly derive from the inclusion of 16 year-olds in the Porteous study, or to fluctuations in adolescent concerns during the intervening decade. Likewise, in the present research, no decrease was recorded in adolescent concerns across year groups to support the findings of Gallagher et al (1992). Although that was a more recent investigation than the research of Porteous, it similarly included older adolescents (in the Gallagher et al study those up to 18 years of age) and was carried out in Northern Ireland. The difference in results may consequently be due to variations between studies in age, or cultural and environmental factors.

Within the research reported here, there were significantly more females ( $p < .01$ ) amongst those who indicated that they had a lot of problems. This result supports previous research by Caspar et al (1996); Forehand et al (1991); Gallagher et al (op.cit.); McGee & Stanton (1992); and Offord et al (1987). However, amongst those recording that they had no problems in the current study, there were significantly more males ( $p < .01$ ) and this appears to be a new finding in the context of the literature reviewed earlier.

With regard to the specific number of problems indicated, four times more students reported 0-5 problems than reported 6-11 problems. Hence the overall student perception of having few personal problems was empirically supported. However, the relative frequencies also suggest that when adolescents consider getting help, it is most unlikely that are concerned about only a single issue, since 79% reported that they would be likely to need assistance with more than one problem.

The total number of problems reported differed significantly between the sexes ( $p < .001$ ) but not across year groups. The former result supports the findings of Stark et al (1989) but the latter finding does not. This divergence may be explained by the inclusion of older adolescents (16 and 17 year olds) in the Stark et al study, a sub-group which made up just over a third of their total sample.

#### Common Types Of Problem

Of the problems identified as likely areas for help, the most common concerns for respondents (including between 33% and 52% of the sample) included their career, schoolwork, relationships, money and feelings. The constellation of career, educational,

self and relationship issues reiterates a pattern of adolescent problems discussed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Each of these four areas of adolescent concern is buttressed by at least ten other studies, as described below.

#### Problems with a career.

Career issues have been identified consistently by adolescent respondents, in the studies of Boldero & Fallon (1995); Friedman (1991); Gallagher et al (1992); Gillies (1989); Hutchinson & Reagan (1989); Nurmi et al (1994); Porteous & Fisher (1980); Porteous & Kellehear (1987); and Violato & Holden (1988). In this context, Tyler (1964) has suggested that occupational concepts may generally not be formed prior to early adolescence. However, in the economic climate of today it appears that either they are now formed in the pre-adolescent years, or that such thinking comes to the fore during early adolescence.

#### Problems with schoolwork.

Concerns about schoolwork have also emerged repeatedly, as shown by the work of Adelman et al (1993); Esser et al (1990); Friedman (1991); Gillies (1989); Hooper (1978); Hutchinson & Reagan (1989); Keys & Fernandes (1993); Kurdek (1987); Littrell, Malia, & Vanderwood (1995); Nurmi et al (1994); Porteous (1985); Spirito et al (1991); Tabberer (1984); Violato & Holden (1988); and Yamamoto et al (1987). The evidence of educational concerns represents one of the more perennial findings from self-report studies of adolescent problems.

### Problems with relationships.

Problems with relationships are likewise widely attested to, and are recorded by Adelman et al (1993); Armacost (1989); Boldero & Fallon (1995); Branwhite (1994); Collins & Harper (1974); Friedman (1991); Hooper (1978); Keys & Fernandes (1993); Kurdek (1987); Littrell et al (1985); McGee & Stanton (1990); Nurmi et al (1994); Porteous & Fisher (1980); Spirito et al (1991); and Violato & Holden (1988). Perhaps the consistency of this finding is to be expected given the students' membership of peer group, friendship, family, and school systems, each of which may offer potential for interpersonal difficulties to occur.

### Problems with the self.

Evidence of self-concern among these English teenagers (33% about their feelings, 26% with their looks and 22% about their body) suggest that this may be a relatively widespread phenomenon. Adolescent unease about some aspect of their emotional or physical functioning has previously been found by Blum et al (1989); Boldero & Fallon (1995); Chaudhari (1976); Collins & Harper (1974); Esser et al (1990); Friedman (1991); Gillies (1989); Kurdek (1987); Nurmi et al (1994); Porteous & Fisher (1980); and Violato & Holden (1988). Accordingly, it may be concluded that the above inference receives substantive support from the literature.

### Exceptions to The Common Types of Problem

Although there were instances in which the findings of this study received widespread empirical backing, in the present research there were some notable exceptions to the pattern of core problems with multiple-study support. The discussion will therefore

address the main exceptions next. Items within this group include those for which only a few supporting studies could be traced.

#### Problems with money.

For this variable, 37% of these English students cited money as a likely problem, and this has been little reported elsewhere. That proportion of respondents is over nine times higher than the 4% identified by McGee & Stanton (1989) in New Zealand. It is also over six times greater than the 6% described by Morey et al (1989) in the USA, and more than a half as many again as the 24% reported by Gillies (1989) in Nottingham. It may be that this finding reflects cultural differences in student experience or perception, although an increasing adolescent sense of financial pressure in recent years cannot altogether be ruled out.

#### Problems with bullying.

Further divergence from the core of widely supported research results was implicit in the finding that 23% of the present sample identified bullying as a problem for which they would be likely to need help. This issue has also been less commonly reported. Anxieties focused on bullying have a shorter history of research investigation, and comparison with American research is inhibited by a lack of reported studies. However, the obtained level of student concern (23%) does not differ markedly from the 19% reported by Branwhite (1994) and the ceiling of 18% recorded by Smith (1991) from previous studies carried out in English Secondary schools.



### Problems with teachers.

Marginally over 20% of the sample identified teachers as a problem with which they would be likely to need help. This is a much lower proportion than that occurring in the one other U.K. study found to report on this issue. Hooper (1978) recorded that 76% of his West of England sample reported problems with teachers. This difference may be attributable to the comparison of the present multiple-site study with a previous single-site investigation. Alternatively, given the extensive time-lapse between the studies, changes in experience and opinion between differing generations of students may also have influenced the reported findings.

### Problems with sex or drugs.

Relatively few adolescents in this sample identified sex (17%) or drugs (15%) as personal problems for which they would be likely to require help. Moreover, a considerable majority (65% and 74%) indicated that they would be unlikely to need help with these topics. This data supports the opinion of Falchikov (1986) who concluded that issues of sex and drugs identified with adolescence by the mass media are out of proportion to the actual extent of adolescent preoccupations. Contrary to the findings of Violato and Holden (1988) for Canadian adolescents, no significant age effects were found for drug-related problems, and the same was true for concerns about sex.

### Problems with mental health.

Only 13% of the sample identified their mind, and just 11% mentioned their dreams as likely topics for help. Such findings suggest that among these secondary students, there was a general absence of concern about their mental health at either conscious or unconscious levels of functioning. This data supports the notion of adolescence as a

normal period of human development, at least from an adolescent viewpoint. It also lends some support to those professionals who view adolescence as a period with a relatively low incidence of mental health problems. (See, for example, the work of Offord et al 1987.)

#### Problems with religion.

Only 6% of the respondents indicated that religion was a problem that they would be likely to require help with. In relation to this finding, it may be relevant that Phelps & Jarvis (1994) noted that the religion sub-scale of their coping inventory did not load on any factor included in their study. This led them to suggest that religious views are not well defined in adolescence. However, there are two other possible interpretations to consider in the context of this survey. Firstly, there is the possibility that adolescent involvement in religion is common, but that it poses few personal problems. Secondly, there is the alternative that this type of problem is uncommon because adolescents have little involvement in religion.

It is difficult to make a judgement within the bounds of this survey, which did not set out to resolve such questions. Fortunately, other surveys of English adolescents provide some assistance. Reid (1977, 1980) has reported that only 6% of teenagers attended church weekly, and 4% monthly. Nonetheless, Homan and Youngman (1982) found that the religious knowledge of secondary school students was enhanced by attending Sunday School. However, Reid's data also showed that 40% of 12-15 year olds had never attended Sunday School, and only 3% still attended at the point when their opinions were sought. Regarding the infrequent reporting of religious problems in

the present survey, the hypothesis that adolescents have little involvement with religion therefore appears to offer the more probable interpretation.

### Summary of The Findings on Personal Problems

Despite a strong indication by over half of the students that they had already solved some problems for themselves, this investigation identifies a core of basic adolescent concerns (regarding issues of career, relationships, schoolwork and the self) which shows considerable consistency between cultures and across the last two decades. Nonetheless, outside of the core concerns, evidence of some significant new issues appears to have emerged quite recently. Furthermore, the problems identified in this investigation were accompanied by a widespread adolescent perception that they would probably need some form of help with them. These findings therefore differ qualitatively from previous research which has restricted itself mainly to identifying adolescent problems. In the present study, registering the presence of a problem formed only a part of the requirement. An additional necessity was that the problems identified were those which students were most likely to require help with, i.e. problems for which they would probably need to augment their own coping resources.

There were no significant differences between year groups in the frequency of reporting any of the problems listed, however, there were variations between the sexes. Significantly more males identified their career as a problem ( $p < .01$ ) while significantly more females ( $p < .001$ ) cited their feelings, their looks, their body, their relationships, sex, and schoolwork ( $p < .01$ ) as problems. A predominance of females reporting emotional or physical concerns has also been recently reported by Caspar et al (1996); Dubow et al (1990); and Rhode & Bellfield (1992).

The finding of differential responding between the sexes but not across year groups is seemingly at variance with the work of Stark et al (1989) who found significant differences on both variables. However, this divergence may be explicable in terms of the inclusion of 17 year-olds, the use of Likert-type ratings, and cultural differences in the Stark et al study. Nonetheless, these workers also noted that differences on the sex variable were more pronounced in their study than were differences between younger and older adolescents.

### Adolescent Coping

One third or more of the present sample (between 34% and 80% according to the problem specified) regarded it as unlikely that they would need help with any problem-category listed. This result is broadly consistent with the research of Walker et al (1990) in which 84% of a large adolescent sample stated that they did not have problems for which they had needed help during the previous year. The present finding is taken to imply that either many students did not have the relevant problems at the time of the survey, or that if they did, they could manage them without recourse to help from others. Given that approximately 90% of the students identified one or more personal problems, the second implication appears more probable. Moreover, an overall 71% of the students reported solving some or a lot of problems without help from any one else. Further analysis of problem-solving reports showed that significantly more students in the later year groups ( $p < .01$ ) reported that they had solved some problems without help from anyone else. Similarly, the number of respondents indicating that they had solved no problems decreased ( $p < .01$ ) across later year groups. These findings suggest a lasting

adolescent commitment to management of their own problems, and the possibility of an association between progress through school and increasing self-reliance.

Results of the survey also indicate that both rational and emotional types of coping were reported by these secondary students. The most common overall pattern was initial worrying (38%) and later independent problem solving (53%). The next most likely reaction was that students initially told themselves that the situation could be worse (21%) and later asked someone else to help solve the problem (31%). The least common response was initially crying (3%) and later asking someone to solve the problem for them (2%).

#### Rational coping.

Rational coping activity was reported by both sexes. Males more frequently indicated ( $p < .001$ ) that they employed the tactics of thinking about something else; of telling themselves that things could be worse; and of trying to solve the problem themselves. Coping by means of diverting attention was also reported by Brown et al (1986). Some caution should be exercised in comparing the two studies however, since the precise meaning of the term "attention diversion" used by these authors was not defined.

Over twice as many male students as females reported that they did nothing in the face of personal problems ( $p < .001$ ). This result is notionally in keeping with the findings of Phelps & Jarvis (1994) who reported that males employ more avoidant coping strategies than females. However, in the present research only 8% of the total sample recorded avoidant coping techniques, so that the statistical difference is actually based upon a very small proportion of the respondents. Since the Phelps & Jarvis study did not

include percentage data, it is not clear what proportion of their sample was involved in reaching their conclusion. Accordingly, it is inferred that the present research provides no more than weak support for the avoidant male coping hypothesis. This interpretation is reinforced by the work of Copeland & Hess (1995) who found that avoiding problems was ranked 11 out of 13 coping patterns for both males and females in their study.

Females more commonly indicated ( $p < .001$ ) that they reacted by worrying (one third more females than males); or by asking someone else to help them to solve the problem. These findings are in keeping with research from other cultures (Bird & Harris, 1990; Patterson & McGubbin, 1987; Rickwood, 1992; Ryan, Stiller & Lynch, 1994; and Sieffge-Krenke, 1990). However, it remains possible that both independent problem-solving and shared problem-solving represent different types of adolescent coping behaviour.

#### Emotional coping.

The more intensely emotive reactions such as getting angry or crying were particularly uncommon, being recorded by only 10% and 3% of the sample. However, the distribution of emotional reactions differed ( $p < .001$ ). Firstly, significantly more males than females reported reacting to problems with anger, a finding which is supported by the work of Bird & Harris (1990) and Greene (1988). Secondly, 16 times more females than males recorded crying when they had a personal problem. Differential female use of crying has also been reported by Copeland & Hess (1995).

In addition, more males than females ( $p < .001$ ) indicated that they released emotional tension by laughing about their problems. Patterson & McGubbin (1987) also found that adolescent males had a higher mean score than females on the use of humour as a coping response, although it was not apparent what proportion of their sample was involved. Phelps & Jarvis (1994) have reported that both sexes use humour relatively infrequently when dealing with problems. In contrast, Copeland & Hess (1995) found that being humorous was included in the top four coping strategies reported by both males and females, so that outcomes differ between the few studies available. However, as no more than 4% of secondary students from the present study indicated laughing at their problems, current data support the proposition that humour may be little used by adolescents in coping with personal problems.

The data from Part One of the survey encourage the view that these early to mid-adolescents had developed a considerable degree of self-reliance, although they had not done so at the price of sacrificing their relationships within or between generations. It therefore appears possible that their relationships with friends and family members may be associated with a tendency to use a relatively controlled approach to solving personal problems. Moreover, the common problem-solving strategies reported for adolescents by Sieffge-Krenke (1990) which included active problem resolution, cognitive redefinition, and reducing emotional tension, were also employed by the English teenagers who participated in this study.

### Summary of The Findings on Adolescent Coping.

The data discussed above indicate that independent attempts to cope with personal problems are common during early to mid-adolescence. In contrast, reported behaviours implying dependency or avoidance appear to be uncommon. Moreover, these are important findings for potential helpers. If adolescents already have a repertoire of coping skills, then those who seek help from others may bring with them personal resources which could be used to attenuate the scale of their problems. Therefore the task of helping should arguably include efforts to access information about existing adolescent coping strategies in order to formulate meaningful solutions.



## Discussion of The Findings on School Information

### Student Profile:

*A representative secondary school student knows that it is possible to get help for personal problems in their school. If he or she decides to approach a member of staff for help, it will probably be their Form Teacher. The Head or Deputy Headteacher are the least likely persons to be approached. Access to the Form Tutor is believed to be easy, and if this route is taken, then the student would expect to wait only minutes to get the help required. However, in the past he or she has most likely neither wanted nor asked for teacher assistance with a personal problem, and therefore has not yet received such help in school.*

### Awareness of Help

Fisher (1983) points out that research on help-giving reflects a dominant belief that helping others is a good thing which should be encouraged. If it is indeed a dominant belief, then it would be reasonable to expect that some provision for helping others should be apparent within our schools. Since the majority of adolescents in this sample (53%) reported that help for personal problems was available to them in their own school, it appears that an established facility for student support had achieved widespread recognition. However, with the remaining 47% of students apparently believing that help was not available to them, or being unaware of its existence, the level of student awareness was far from being comprehensive.

It did not prove possible to locate a body of literature which had specifically addressed student knowledge of facilities for getting help with personal problems in school. Accordingly, it is concluded that the above data provide new information on adolescent awareness of school-based helping.

### Choice of Helper

When identifying potential helpers in school, more students (25% of the sample) selected their Form Tutor than any other member of the teaching staff. This proportion differs markedly from that reported in the one other study found to include a Form Tutor option. Murgatroyd (1977) reported that 9% of his sample chose their Form Teacher as a potential helper. Murgatroyd's key question was posed in the form "If you felt the need to talk to someone about a problem - someone in school, a friend, or parent, or anyone, who would you talk to? (Murgatroyd, 1977:75). Three categories of problem were then specified. These included a personal/private problem, a career problem, and a problem connected with school.

The present study linked two questions, with the second one providing the item under consideration. The first of these (item 2.1 on the questionnaire) asked, "Is it possible to get help with a personal problem in your school?" The second question (labelled as item 2.2) asked, "Who would you go to for this kind of help in school?" Five different teacher options were included against separate boxes for the students to check. Hence the two studies employed somewhat different methodology. The 16% difference in nominating Form Teachers between studies may therefore be accounted for by procedural variations, changes in schools and students during the intervening years, and the contrast between a multiple-site and a single-site investigation.

Two thirds more students in the present sample chose their Form Tutor than opted for their Head of Year. Additionally, the Form Tutors were selected four times more often than Subject Teachers, twelve times more often than Deputy Headteachers, and twenty-five times more often than Headteachers. These ratios portray a reduced scale of student endorsement for more senior staff as helpers. This finding suggests that formality and infrequent contact may reduce student perceptions of helping potential in others. The small number of students (5%) indicating that they would approach a school doctor for help lends some credence to this notion.

The above data provide a range of information about adolescent choice of helper in schools which was previously unavailable. (Earlier studies of adolescent help-seeking failed to distinguish adequately between the differing types of teaching staff.) However, such information is important because secondary schools are complex organisations employing large numbers of teachers from whom potential helpers may be chosen.

#### Use of Support in School

Virtually two thirds of the students (65%) reported that access to their helper was easy or very easy, suggesting some association between availability and choice of helper. Ease of access was probably an important consideration in the context of adolescent expectations for waiting time. Two items of information underline the relevance of this point. Firstly, more than half of the adolescent respondents ( 52%) expected to wait only minutes or hours for help, and for two thirds of this group, minutes was the chosen response. Secondly, only a small number (15%) expected to wait days or weeks, so that immediacy of support was the general expectation. For the minority of students who had

asked a teacher to talk over one of their problems, results suggested that most of them got a rapid response. Only 16% reported waiting days or weeks for teacher help. These figures reiterate the importance of a finding by Adelman, Barker & Nelson (1993) that ease of access is one of the important determinants of the use of school-based support during adolescence.

Data that indicated the extent to which adolescents orientate towards the supportive resources of their school were equally striking. Here, 78% recorded that they had rarely or never wanted a teacher to talk over one of their problems with them, backed by 89% reporting that they had rarely or never asked for this to happen. This suggests a considerable overlap between reported student attitudes and reported behaviours. Moreover, when asked if they had actually received help with a personal problem in school, 18% responded that they had, but 82% indicated that they had not. This finding provides support for the work of Wintre et al (1988) who reported a low level of adolescent support on using adult experts for problem-solving purposes.

#### Summary of Key Findings on Main Variables

A key finding is here defined as one involving 51% or more of the sample. Findings involving a minority of the sample are not discussed because in many cases they involve such small numbers of students as to lack widespread psychological or practical significance.

#### Key findings by sex.

Only one of the recorded differences on the sex variable derived from a questionnaire item on which more than 50% of the sample responded. Significantly more females than males ( $p < .001$ ) indicated that it was possible to get help with a personal problem in school. (This finding was based upon 53% of the sample responding.) Since it was found in Part One of the questionnaire that females reported having more personal problems, this elevated level of awareness may be related to greater support-seeking experience in school.

#### Key findings by year group.

The absence of Year Group differences suggests a variety of possibilities. Firstly, it might indicate that basic information about how their in-school support system operates is widely disseminated by teachers. Secondly, it seems possible that this body of information might be assimilated by students early in the secondary phase of their education, and retained thereafter. Thirdly, it may be that the relevant knowledge-base, either as presented, or as later modified by the students themselves, serves their decision-making adequately across years eight through ten. A fourth possibility is that as far as adolescents are concerned, the delivered knowledge-base may be largely irrelevant to their management of personal problems in school.

#### Key findings by school.

For this part of the questionnaire, there was only one significant difference on the school variable which involved the majority of the sample. Significantly more students from School Six ( $p < .0005$ ) indicated that help was available in school, a finding which was based upon 53% of the sample responding on this item. School Six was the only one

which had an open-door policy regarding parent-contact and that had trained parent-volunteers to assist students with learning difficulties. It may therefore be that these arrangements influenced adolescent opinion of the school's helping resources. With that single exception, however, the findings highlight how infrequently substantive differences occurred on the school variable in this part of the questionnaire.

Key findings by location.

There were no significant differences in the location data, so that it is the overall consistency of opinion between urban and rural students which is the outstanding attribute of findings on the location variable.

## Discussion of The Findings on Student Help Preferences

### Student Profile:

*A representative secondary school student prefers a friend of the same age and same sex as their helper. However, if the student has to choose a teacher, he or she will probably choose their Form Tutor. In deciding how to make the first contact with the Form Tutor, the student is likely to opt for a direct approach on their own behalf, rather than getting someone else to speak for them. Their preferred mode of meeting would be a face-to-face interaction taking place in a school office, on a one-to-one basis. The favourite time for such a meeting would be after school has finished.*

*In the course of the meeting, the student would like to be asked what was the matter, and encouraged to talk about the current problem. He or she would also like to be asked about their feelings. The preferred helper intervention would be to suggest optional ways of handling the problem, and to offer potential solutions. Contact with the helper is most likely to be terminated if they tell others what the student had said. Nonetheless, in framing advice for a friend on how to manage a personal problem, the student would first suggest that in seeking help they should also ask a friend.*

### Preferred Helper Attributes

In this sample of secondary students the preference for friends or parents as helpers far exceeds the level of support given to any other group referred to. A favourable perception of friends and parents as helpers has previously been reported by Hortacsu (1989). Furman & Buhrmester (1985) also showed that as helpers, friends and parents

received the highest ratings from young people. With more than twice as many students choosing friends as opted for their own parents (57% to 25%) in the present study adolescent preferences operated strongly in favour of friends as helpers. This finding supports that of Rhode & Bellfield (1992) who also reported a ratio of approximately 2:1 adolescents favouring friends over parents as helpers. Although adolescents sometimes establish an alliance with the parents of a friend, this option was not popular regarding help for a personal problem, being selected by only 5% of the sample. Friendship appears to be particularly important, in that barely 1% indicated a preference for another student as a helper, suggesting that peer-group membership in itself may not confer helper status.

These findings extend and support the conclusion of Adelman et al (1993) that help is sought more from friends than from family members. They also reinforce the views of Hunter & Youniss (1982) and Kandel & Lesser (1969) that adolescents are more likely to utilise friends than parents when coping with problems. Moreover, they are consistent with the opinion of Paterson et al (1994) that friends are consulted more regarding existential problems. However, Rosenberg (1965) found that parental advice was sought more than that of peers when there were important decisions to be made. Adolescent support seeking from parents has also been confirmed by the work of Berndt & Miller (1989); Hendry et al (1992); Keys & Fernandes (1993); Porteous & Fisher (1980); Siann et al (1982); and Whitney & Smith (1992).

Consequently both friends and parents appear to be regarded as important helpers during adolescence, although the evidence for a long-term trend is mixed. Some researchers suggest that as adolescents get older, they seek support from parents less and



friends more, (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Hunter & Ionises, 1982; Papini et al, 1990; Wintre et al 1988). Others suggest that that support-seeking remains fairly constant through the adolescent years for both parents and friends (Greenberg et al, 1993; Hill, 1993; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Such issues are settled for this sample by the finding that that the preference for parents as helpers declined by 44% across year groups ( $p < .02$ ). There was no significant change across Year Groups in preferring friends as helpers, but there was a non-significant trend indicating an increasing number of students in later year groups who nominated friends (The relevant totals were 75 in Year 8; 87 in Year 9; and 91 in Year 10, yielding an overall increase of 21%). These data lend qualified support to the view that more adolescents prefer friends as helpers by mid adolescence, and less prefer parents, at least as far as support for personal problems is concerned.

Further adolescent stipulation favoured a same-sex helper (57% of the sample) of the same age (47% of the sample) replicating the findings of three earlier studies (Adams & Adams, 1991; Northman, 1978; and Wintre et al, 1988.) Only 12% of the sample preferred an opposite-sex helper. An older helper came in as a close second preference (being supported by 43%). However, there was most support among this sub-group for someone just a little older (27%) with only 16% favouring someone a lot older. Northman (1978) reported similar support for someone a little older in an American sample. In the present study, younger helpers were not a popular choice, since they were the stated preference of a mere 1% of the students.

Shell & Eisenberg (1992) have advanced an interesting explanation for the preference of an older helper over a younger helper. They surmise that since older siblings often take up the role of helper in the family, children may become conditioned

early on in their lives to expect help from older persons, or to feel humiliated by help from a younger person. In learning contexts, these workers believe that older helpers may be preferred because of situational role-expectations.

Adolescents may also discriminate between helpers in terms of the assistance that they can offer for different types of problem. For example, Meeus (1989) found that young people in Holland felt more supported by mothers regarding peer-group problems, while Wintre et al (1988) noted that Canadian adolescents preferred peer advice in the face of serious conflict between their parents. Boldero & Fallon (1995) concluded that Australian adolescents tended to seek help from a friend regarding inter-personal problems, a teacher for educational problems, and another professional for health problems, results which were in keeping with those of Evans & Poole (1987) and Frydenberg & Lewis (1993).

A preference for help from a teacher rather than a peer, a parent, or another professional, accounted for less than 2% of the student responses, well below the 13% of teacher nominations obtained by Armacost (1990). This outcome is in accord with Galbo's (1994) view that teachers are seldom found to be personally significant for a large percentage of adolescents, given their established utilisation of friends and parents for personal support. Given that Furman & Buhrmester (1985) noted that teachers were turned to mostly for instrumental aid, and Nelson-Le-Gall & Gummerman (1984) found that young people preferred teacher help for academically-focused problems, perhaps it is to be expected that their assistance is only weakly supported for problems of a personal nature. Rickwood (1992) has also observed that adolescents demonstrate a preference for non-professional helpers. Teachers may take some comfort from the finding in the

present study that secondary school students also gave minimal support to the helper options of another professional or another student.

### Helper Contact Preferences

It is of some interest that when considering getting help from a teacher, three quarters of the sample said that they would prefer to make contact for themselves. This option was supported 10 times more frequently than referral by a friend, 15 times more often than referral via their family, and 75 times more often than referral by another teacher. In addition, the desire for personal contact as the initial mode of interaction far outstripped contact by letter or contact by telephone, being chosen at least 15 times more frequently.

Most adolescents wanted a face-to-face meeting (71%) in a one-to-one context (52%). Meeting with a teacher in the company of another person was a less well supported alternative. While just under a third of the sample (31%) wished to meet with a friend present; in comparison only 3% wanted to meet in a group of other students with problems; only 6% wanted a parent to be there; and just 2% wished their whole family to be present. These findings support the opinion of Karabenick & Knapp (1991) that help-seeking in an academic context may be related more to student competency than to dependency. Moreover, they serve as a caution to those professionals who automatically choose to intervene with group or family-focused interventions.

To conclude this section, a preference for daytime meetings, either in or out of school time, were favoured by three quarters of the students. The most popular single time was after school, with just 5% preferring an evening meeting. However, only 15% wanted to meet a helper during lessons, so there was little evidence that the majority of

the students saw meeting a teacher as an excuse to get out of their classes. An ideal location appeared to be a school office, with over twice as many students choosing this alternative as selected any other school location, and four times more did so than expressed a wish to meet at home. The general desire to meet alone and in an office might imply that students do not wish to be observed or overheard, an implication which is strengthened by the finding that less than 3% wanted to make contact with a helper in a corridor or the school library.

### Helper Communication Preferences

A particularly important aspect of the students' opinion was the emphasis that they placed upon wanting helpers to adopt an active role throughout the helping interaction. When asked a range of questions about what they would like to happen if they needed help, direct helper assistance was repeatedly endorsed. One third or more of the students wanted to be asked what was the matter and to talk about their problem, suggesting that problem-focused talk was considered necessary. Almost a half of the respondents wanted to be asked how they felt, and just under a third wanted to be asked questions about their feelings. Hence talking about both their problems and their feelings appeared important for a substantial proportion of the sample.

However, by far the most frequently indicated adolescent disposition was that of wanting helpers to give them suggestions. This preference took two forms. Firstly, there was a widespread need for helpers to suggest alternative ways of working out student problems (62% of the sample). Secondly, a large majority wanted helpers to suggest possible solutions for their problems (69% of the sample). These findings indicate that one reason for adolescents to seek support in school is that they may not always have

ready-made solutions themselves. Moreover, it is possible they find that coping with a particular personal problem calls for skills or resources that they do not initially possess. Therefore, although there are differing forms of assistance that are in keeping with student preferences, solution-focused interventions seem to feature strongly amongst the favoured alternatives.

The communication preferences described above complement traditional models of the helping process in several respects, for example in talking about problems and feelings. However, they also call into question certain aspects of conventional practice in the context of helping adolescents. The majority preference for helper suggestions questions the validity of an entirely non-directive model of helping for secondary school students. Similarly, only one student in ten wanted a helper to summarise their problem, so that paraphrasing did not appear to be a widespread student priority. Since there was negligible support for helpers waiting for students to speak first, there is evidence that the clinical practice of inducing deliberate silences may be unproductive in school-based helping. Moreover, where these techniques inhibit helpers from offering constructive suggestions to young people seeking assistance, a genuine concern arises regarding the basic assumptions being made. Findings from this research suggest that they may not be founded upon views of adolescents themselves, and consequently may not represent a professional ideal of client-centred helping.

### Termination Issues

Another significant feature of the research reported is that it underlines how highly students regard the issue of privacy in the context of their school community. One of the primary reasons which 47% of these teenagers gave for making a decision to terminate

contact with a helper was that of the provider disclosing personal information. This perspective received significantly more support from students in Year Ten ( $p < .001$ ). The level of response on this issue is much higher than the 13% showing concern over possible violations of their confidence reported by Kayser-Boyd et al (1985). The magnitude of this difference may derive from variations in adolescent experience and environmental or cultural factors over time and between the American and English research sites involved. The identification of concern about disclosure in the present sample is nonetheless in accord with the assertion of McGuire et al (1994) that children value privacy in helping relationships, and are negatively affected by threats of unauthorised disclosure. The importance attributed to privacy by these adolescents is underlined by the second reason given for deciding to terminate contact, namely that of being asked questions that were too personal, which suggests that it may be essential to explore adolescent views of the helping agenda before it is implemented.

Indeed Gelso & Carter (1994) view the strength of the working alliance as being affected by the extent to which the helper and client agree on the goals of their work, and upon the tasks that are useful to attain the goals agreed. Closer attention to these issues may be productive in assisting young people to maintain helping relationships. It also seems desirable on the ground that early termination seems common, given O'Leary's (1979) finding that 45% of young people discontinued counselling as early as session two.

### Advice to Friends

The most commonly indicated recommendation to a friend with a personal problem was to ask a friend (30%) closely followed by that of asking a parent (28%). These options

were exercised almost twice as often as that of asking a teacher. The only other located study to pose the question of what advice would be given to friends (Wiggins & Moody, 1987) did not include an option for choosing significant others or teachers, as it focused on counsellors. Going by the results already discussed, one explanation as to why remote helping facilities (such as Childline and magazine advice columns) received very few endorsements may therefore be found in the strong adolescent preference for getting assistance from significant others.

The publicity generated to promote the National Childline may have been picked up by this sample of students, but only 8% indicated that this would be the direction in which they would point their friends, reiterating the low adolescent priority assigned to telephone contact. Similarly, despite the widespread targeting of teenagers by magazine publishers in recent years, a mere 3% of the sample stated that they would suggest the pursuit of that option to friends having problems. It seems probable that both the Childline and magazine alternatives may to some extent be handicapped by limited familiarity. Delay in obtaining assistance (a valid consideration in trying to contact a busy telephone number, or awaiting a response from a magazine advice column) may also be of significance, since findings from Part Two of the questionnaire indicated the these students generally anticipated waiting only for minutes to receive help, rather than for hours or days.

## Summary of Key Findings on Main Variables

### Key findings by sex.

Of the significant ( $p < .001$ ) sex differences reported in Chapter Four, greatest weight is assigned to the four items which involved a majority (i.e. more than 51%) of the total number of students responding. These were preferring to meet a helper alone, having a helper of the same sex, getting help from a friend, and the helper giving suggestions. Male predominance was found on one of these items, and female predominance on three others. Two thirds more males than females indicated that they would prefer to meet a helper alone (based upon 52% of the sample). However, one fifth more females than males preferred a friend as a helper, and four fifths more favoured a helper of the same sex (57% of the sample responding in each case). Approximately 25% more females than males wanted the helper to give them suggestions (based on 62% of the sample responding). These findings suggest that in seeking help for personal problems, more males tend to uphold their independence, while more females than males regard the quality of interpersonal contact as being important.

### Key findings by year group.

On the Year Group variable, only two of the significant findings reported were derived from items for which more than 50% of the sample had responded. Here, significantly more Year Ten students ( $p < .01$ ) preferred to meet a helper alone (a finding based on 52% of the sample). Also, more Year Ten students ( $p < .01$ ) wanted a helper to suggest a possible solution for their problem (62% of the sample responding on this item). This data suggests that privacy becomes a salient issue for more senior students. Given the



evidence discussed earlier that there is no significant increase in the number of personal problems reported, an alternative explanation may be that students' need for suggested solutions is related to an increasing complexity of problems from Year Eight through Year Ten.

Key findings by school or location.

There were no reported findings on the school or location variables in the results for Part Three which were derived from a majority of the sample.

## Discussion of The Findings on Student Experience of Teacher Support

### Student Profile:

*A representative secondary school student sought teacher help of his or her own volition. He or she was looked at by the teacher, asked to talk about the problem, and required to talk about personal feelings. The teacher said that he or she would help, offered alternatives for dealing with the problem, and suggested some possible solutions. Most of the assistance given was in keeping with what the student expected, and was regarded as helpful. Subsequently the problem got better, and sometimes went away completely. In certain instances, the help also assisted with additional problems that were not specifically addressed, most often an old problem. In other cases, no effect on the student's other problems was recorded. While communicating with a helper, the student found it particularly easy to talk about bullying, their feelings, and schoolwork.*

The paucity of research on adolescent help-seeking alluded to by Ostrov (1985) is nowhere more apparent than in the context of their views of helping interventions. By examining adolescent experience of school-based helping, this part of survey provides information on the acceptability of specific procedures and helper behaviours. Moreover, it does so in a context where the 96 respondents had received teacher support for personally meaningful problems.

### Rationale For Seeking Support

Self-referrals ran at almost double the number of referrals which were made at the recommendation of either a friend or a parent, and more than 10 times the proportion made at the recommendation of a teacher. These findings suggest strong student commitment towards being pro-active in searching for solutions. They also help to sustain the view that support-seeking can be construed as a sign of adolescent coping rather than one of dependency upon others. In addition, the above ratio of referrals indicates that the influence of friends and parents in deciding to seek support is much more frequently recorded than that of teachers.

### Experience of Teacher Rapport

A substantial proportion of these adolescents reported empathic behaviours on the part of the teachers with whom they had discussed personal problems. These included looking at the students (44%); greeting them (29%); and using their first names (34%). These actions were backed up by asking the students how they felt (47%); enquiring if they had told anyone else about their feelings, also notably by asking related questions (71%); and appearing interested (34%). The teachers also built rapport by nodding their heads (31%); telling students not to worry (56%); saying they would help (54%); or telling them about a similar problem of their own (21%). A further 9% of the students indicated that their teachers had said something nice about them.

Student reports therefore suggest that they most commonly experienced teachers engaging in exploratory questions or providing reassurance. According to this sample, teachers used questions more than three times as often as self-disclosure, and seven times

more often than compliments. Accordingly, it may be that certain aspects of developing rapport deserve greater emphasis in relation to helping troubled children. For example, Mills (1985) found that many adolescents found it difficult to start talking, although they revealed more information later on when self-disclosure had been modelled by their helper.

#### Experience of the Helping Intervention

It appears from the information provided by the students that teachers adopted a clear problem-solving orientation. Approximately one half of the students indicated that they were asked to talk about their problem, and were asked questions about it. Only 13% recorded that teachers had gone on to describe their problem in a few words, but 46% noted that their teachers had suggested alternatives for handling the problem. Contrary to the early traditions of the counselling movement, it appears that teachers employed paraphrasing of problems infrequently, and were willing to provide problem-related advice.

According to the data however, attempts to harness the personal resources of the students for problem-solving purposes was relatively uncommon. Less than a quarter of the sample reported that they had been asked for their ideas, how they had solved other problems, or if they knew a possible solution for the problem at hand. Yet almost 60% indicated that teachers had suggested a possible solution. This appears to be a constructive practice insofar as Engen et al (1988) reported that 39% of their adolescents believed problem-solving to be one of the main benefits getting help. Teachers were often perceived as demonstrating appropriate interpersonal skills and sometimes as using particular counselling techniques such as non-verbal cueing, exploratory questioning, or

self-disclosure. In contrast however, the use of ego-building statements and drawing upon the student's own repertoire of coping skills was rarely reported.

It might therefore be concluded that teacher intervention appears to have been built upon both cognitive and affective components, which are broadly in accord with the range of experiences which students indicated that they would prefer to encounter in school-based helping situations. In addition, the reported range of teacher behaviours seems compatible with a student preference for contact with teachers who are friendly, listen, stay calm, and deal fairly with problems (Branwhite, 1988) and with teachers who exhibit qualities like those of their friends, such as honesty, trust, and a caring approach (Galbo, 1994). Moreover, the evidence of this study points to teachers providing active intervention, an approach which is in keeping with the assertion of Garmezy & Rutter(1985) that just talking through problems may be an invalid form of support for children. However, it also appears that more use could be made of adolescents' personal resources.

#### Student Expectation and Evaluation of Help Received

Far from being reluctant to attribute any benefit to the helping encounter, two thirds of those who sought support from their teachers indicated that most or all of their expectations had been met. Moreover, 59% of those who had received teacher assistance evaluated it as quite helpful or very helpful. This compares favourably with satisfaction levels recorded in other school-based studies of secondary level students. Satisfaction with school counsellors for example ranges from 24% (Newport, 1976) to 59% (Engen et al 1988). The present research also measures up to satisfaction levels of 57% for listening or 37% for advice from peer-counsellors (Morey et al 1989); and 40% for

intervention from a psychiatric service family therapy team (Dunne & Thompson, 1995). However it is not as high as the 90% level reported for 17-18 year olds in a Los Angeles high school (Adelman et al, 1993) a difference which may be accounted for by divergence in age, school, and cultural variables between the two samples involved. In the current study, not only were the students in early to mid-adolescence, but they were from a variety of urban and rural English schools. The absence of a significant difference in satisfaction levels between the sexes recorded in this study reinforces a finding by Northman (1985).

#### Effects of The Intervention

Notwithstanding positive adolescent perceptions of help received, the question remains of how far the students believed that they derived any benefit from intervention provided. On this separate but equally important issue, a majority of the recipients of teacher assistance again provided a positive response. Two thirds of this student sample reported that they obtained either a reduction or a cessation of the referred problem, while a further 9% gained a temporary respite. This not only attests to a general adolescent perception of the effectiveness of teacher intervention, but it compares favourably with a recent 50% adolescent endorsement of benefit derived from treatment received in an adolescent psychiatric unit (Stuart-Smith, 1994). Moreover, while 38% of the students in the present study recorded that their problem had got better but did not go away, this contrasts with 85% of an adolescent unit sample reporting that their problems had continued in some form (Wells, Morris, Jones & Allen 1978).

In relation to the issue of whether or not the help provided was generalised by the recipients to other problems, no one-way outcome was derived. Indeed, the data were

evenly divided, with close to one third of the students who had received teacher assistance with their personal problem saying that it had also helped them with other problems, and virtually the same proportion indicating that it had not helped with other problems. One possible explanation for this finding is that the helping approach yielded a ripple effect where the teachers concerned had employed a general-case problem-solving strategy, but that it yielded no such benefit when only problem-specific guidance was given.

#### Identification of Easy and Difficult Topics

The present investigation extends an earlier line of enquiry to a wider range of issues. Only one previous study was found to report adolescent opinion on the value of topics discussed with a school-based helper. Mills (1985) reported that hobbies and relationships with others were popular, but unhappy times were perceived as the worst topic to talk about. However, two constraints of this approach are that hobbies generally seem unlikely to be a source of personal problems, and unhappy times constitute a broad category which may conceal a range of more specific issues.

In the current study, hobbies were not included for the reason already given, and relationships were classed as easy to talk about by only 15% of the respondents. The topic most often classed as easy for this sample was bullying (47%). Feelings were the topic most frequently categorised as hard to talk about (32%). However, opinions on other topics ranged between these two extremes. Differences in findings between these two studies can probably be accounted for by variations in sample size (50 in the earlier study and 540 in the current study); in the gender distribution (three times more males

than females in the prior investigation, and equal numbers here); in culture (Canadian versus English adolescents); and in research technique (interview versus survey).

With reference to the ease or difficulty of communication across the range of topics covered, bullying, feelings, and schoolwork were rated easy by 34-47% of the respondents. Just one topic (feelings) received a comparable level of citation (32%) as being hard to talk about. Support for the idea that personal feelings can be both an “easy” and a “hard” domain to talk about is a somewhat paradoxical finding. In fact, 42% of the students who had received help from a teacher reported that their feelings had been easy to talk about, 32% indicated that feelings had been hard to discuss, and just under 2% that their feelings had been both easy and hard to talk about. Hence it appears that students classifying feelings as either easy or hard to talk about in the main represent different sub-sets of the sample.

Three possible explanations for differing student perceptions about discussing their feelings arise. Firstly, these findings might imply the existence of individual differences in adolescent perception, i.e. that certain individuals normally find feelings easy to talk about, while others usually find it hard to do so. Secondly, during the adolescent years students may find that each perception holds true at times, e.g. that attributes like the quality, intensity, or variation in feelings may sometimes be easy and sometimes be difficult to communicate to a helper. Thirdly, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive, and therefore may interact at times. Out of the three topics retrospectively classed as “easy”, two of them (feelings and schoolwork) had been identified by 33% or more of the students in Part One of the survey as problems for which students would be likely to need help.



### Summary of Key Findings on Main Variables.

#### Key findings by sex.

Although the survey findings included significant differences on the sex and year group variables, none of those reported in the results were based upon a majority of the students responding to the items involved.

#### Key findings by year group.

Since no significant differences occurred on the Year group variable in Part Four of the questionnaire, there are no majority findings to discuss.

#### Key findings by school.

Two items yielded significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) involving a majority of the sample. School Six produced the most students of any school who reported that it was possible to get help for personal problems in school (a finding base upon the 53% of the sample who responded to this item). School Five had the most students who indicated that they had never asked for help (with 72% of the sample responding). Findings on the school variable were therefore characterised by widespread agreement.

#### Key findings by location.

Since no significant differences occurred on the location variable in Part Four of the questionnaire, it follows that no majority findings are available for discussion.

### Overview of Key Findings on Main Variables.

The overall pattern of findings on the four main variables analysed for each part of the questionnaire is that significant differences involving a majority of the sample accounted for a very small proportion of the findings. This view is reinforced by a complete absence of significant differences on the year group and location variables in Part Two and Part Four of the questionnaire. An outstanding feature of the survey data accordingly appears to be one of considerable agreement between the participating students.

## **Discussion of The Experimental Findings**

### Foundation of The Present Research

The experimental phase of the research addresses a deficit in the threat-to-self-esteem (TTSE) literature. It does so by providing a test of the TTSE hypothesis which is based in a real-world setting and founded upon personally meaningful adolescent issues. In reviewing previous research on the TTSE effect, Nadler (1986) points out that the helping events studied were relatively narrow, and involved artificial helping encounters. To this view it can be added that TTSE research has very rarely involved adolescent samples, but even where it has, the issues addressed were researcher-generated and hypothetical, rather than genuine personal problems. The discussion which follows will diverge from the sequence in which the results were reported in Chapter Four. In doing so, it will first consider the implication of the findings for the TTSE hypothesis, then discuss the implications of findings on students' initial self-esteem scores, and finally consider the issue of treatment effects.

### The Threat -to-Self-Esteem Hypothesis

The results obtained show that neither of the two TTSE-relevant hypotheses was supported. The first of these (H<sub>2</sub>) predicted that students with the highest initial self-esteem should demonstrate the greatest post-treatment reduction in self-esteem scores. The second hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) predicted that post-treatment self-esteem scores for the group receiving the personal emphasis treatment would be lower than those of the group receiving the educational emphasis treatment.

The lack of evidence to support direct application of the threat-to-self-esteem (TTSE) hypothesis of Fisher et al (1983) or the developmental derivative of that hypothesis by Shell & Eisenberg (1992) is the most important finding amongst the experimental results. Indeed, this result reinforces another recent study which failed to support the operation of a threat-to-self-esteem effect within an adolescent sample. Kofta & Sedek (1989) reported that their results did not support the notion of ego-threatening failure at all in a group of female high-school students.

As expressed by Eisenberg (1983) adolescents with high self-esteem are held to be more sensitive to threat, because they gain more from a consistent image of being competent. In this context however, it is important to understand that high self-esteem is defined as a relative construct, and not an absolute one. This constraint is made clear by Nadler (1987) who identified the presence of high or low self-esteem by a median split in scores on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale (Coopersmith, 1967).

### Alternative Explanations of The Findings

Four alternative hypotheses will now be put forward to explain why the threat-to-self-esteem effect did not appear in the context of the present study. These include the possibilities of limited validity, lack of threat, attributes of the situation, and student entitlement, each of which is separately discussed below:-

#### 1. Limited validity.

The orientation of TTSE researchers has been strongly in favour of laboratory research, which provide little information on what happens in real world settings, or on either the consistency or variability of adolescent response across different situations (Eisenberg, 1983). Contemporary research on the TTSE model is frequently based upon studies of adult subjects working on ad hoc laboratory tasks. However, findings based upon laboratory research with adults may provide an inadequate analogue for secondary school students. Furthermore, as Shell & Eisenberg (1992) point out, not only have investigators paid relatively little attention to recipients' reactions to aid, but also very few have examined children's reactions to aid, and extremely few those of adolescents. The TTSE model may therefore be of limited validity for adolescent help-seekers because of its developmental history derived from research conducted in clinical and rehabilitational settings, in writings on the aged, and in discussion of social welfare programmes (Nadler, 1987).

#### 2. Lack of threat.

In addition, the TTSE hypothesis itself predicts that situational conditions (i.e. characteristics of the donor, the aid, and the context) and recipient attributes determine whether help is primarily threatening or supportive in a given setting (Fisher, Nadler, &

De Paulo, 1983). When help is primarily supportive, then these authors believe that reactions to it are non-defensive. Since the intervention for the experimental group in the present study was carefully formulated to be supportive, it would seem to follow that a threat reaction was not triggered. Moreover, there appeared to be no differential effect between exposure to the researcher in the helping treatment or in the assessing treatment. No significant reduction in self-esteem scores would imply that no perceived threat to self-esteem occurred. This is probably the most economical and most direct explanation of the results obtained.

### 3. Attributes of the situation.

A related but qualitatively different account of the results may be derived from the fact that the adolescents involved in this research were genuinely seeking support. That is to say they sought help of their own volition. Moreover, the issues for which they needed help were those which were salient to their own individual situations and needs. This presents a very different set of circumstances from previous TTSE research in which, for example, participants have been set difficult anagram tasks to solve in a group or with an anonymous helper placed in another room. In the former case of genuine help-seeking, the level of personal meaning and involvement are likely to be very high. In the latter situation of completing researcher-assigned tasks, the same assumptions may not be valid. Because of the qualitative difference between the experimental circumstances in the past and the present research, effects favourable to the TTSE hypothesis may not occur under both conditions. This interpretation might also account for the findings reported in the present study.

#### 4. Student entitlement.

Greenberg and Westcott (1983) found that the likelihood of threat is reduced in situations where help-seekers experience a sense of entitlement, and entitlement to professional help had previously been communicated to the students by teaching staff at the school concerned. A further possibility is that an interaction effect was operating, in which lack of threat, personal meaning of the problems, and sense of entitlement combined to counteract a potential threat-to-self-esteem. However, this explanation per se did not fall within the scope of the investigation, and application of Occam's razor would favour the no-threat hypothesis advanced above.

#### Initial Self-Esteem Scores

An initial difference in self-esteem scores between the treatment groups was an unexpected finding, with students in the personal emphasis treatment (PET) group scoring significantly higher ( $p < .001$ ) than those in the educational emphasis treatment (EET) group. This finding ran counter to the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and to the theoretical prediction ( $H_1$ ) that adolescents seeking help may have lower self-esteem scores than peers receiving an alternative educational treatment. The occurrence of significantly higher self-esteem scores in the PET group could perhaps be accounted for by assuming that their help-seeking behaviour contributed to more positive views about themselves. However, this hypothesis was not tested in the context of the present research.

Another theoretical explanation exists in positing a potential difference in levels of competitiveness and assertion between the groups. Holland & Thomas (1994) found that the strongest and most consistent predictor of self-esteem existed in high levels of a masculine sex-role orientation. The presence of stronger "masculine" characteristics

such as assertiveness in the PET group could perhaps be expected to influence their initial self-esteem scores. However, the relevant variables did not fall within the scope of the investigation, and therefore this notion remains speculative.

Two situational possibilities are that between-group differences may be due to sampling variability, or that they derive from the introductory protocol delivered prior to the treatment interventions. The latter inference is centred in the procedures employed for each group. They show that students in the EET group were informed that the outcome for the group as a whole was considered more important than individual outcomes. Although this was intended to reduce student anxiety, it remains possible that highlighting the status of group results may have been interpreted as meaning that the individual's contribution was of little value, thereby attenuating their self-esteem scores.

#### Treatment Effects and Self-Esteem

The absence of any significant influence of treatment effects upon self-esteem scores also deserves careful consideration. Firstly, it is important to note that the experimental manipulation was conceived as a test of the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis, which conventionally has been tested in short-duration laboratory investigations. Accordingly, the present research was designed to provide a single-session test, and not a programme of self-esteem enhancement. Indeed, attempts to build self-esteem have typically involved multiple-episode interventions. The number of sessions employed has ranged, for instance, from four (Rose, 1978); through five (Ammerman & Fryear, 1975); and six (Gurney, 1981); to eight (Parker, 1974); up to ten (Altmann & Furnesz, 1973); then twelve (Felker, Stanwyk, & Kay, 1973); and even as many as eighty-five (Gearhart, Gentilcore, Rhinehart, Simon, & Simon 1977). Therefore increases in self-esteem scores

were not predicted. Secondly, the key attributes of the experimental treatment were problem-focused, and therefore not designed to bear specifically upon self-esteem scores.

Hence a one-off help session with a specific problem-focus appears unlikely to enhance global self-esteem ratings. Moreover, Lepper, Ross, & Lau (1986) have suggested that simply demonstrating to a child, even in a clear and concrete fashion, that his or her performance may well have been the consequence of an inept or biased teacher, a substandard school, or even prior social, cultural, or economic disadvantages, may have little impact on his or her feelings of personal competence or potential. Indeed, Pope et al (1988) reiterate that a multi-session programme be completed where the treatment objective is that of enhancing students' self-esteem.

### Theoretical Implications

It may seem straightforward to extrapolate from adult research in linking threat-to-self-esteem to reluctance to seek professional help during adolescence. However, as adolescents are clearly not adults, a logical query arises regarding the extent to which the adult-emphasis research tradition may be applicable to individuals in their adolescent years. In light of the experimental findings reported in Chapter Four, in situations where adolescents themselves bring forward genuine problems for psychological assistance there may also be empirical grounds for questioning the validity of some aspects of TTSE theory. (For example the assertion that individuals with high self-esteem are necessarily more vulnerable to TTSE effects in help-seeking situations.) However, while this inference is implicit in the results of the present study, it should be noted that there is a dearth of TTSE research dealing with personally meaningful adolescent concerns. Indeed, it could be argued that there is as yet so little direct evidence available that the



status of TTSE theory for the age-group and context investigated is an open question. Hence attempts to build TTSE theory into a comprehensive cross-generational model would clearly be facilitated by programmatic investigation within adolescent samples. Such investigation would also need to accommodate the finding (Adelman & Taylor, 1986) that adolescent reluctance to seek help can sometimes be appropriate and therefore may not require a TTSE-based explanation.

### **Implications For Practice**

The research reported here suggests that staffing resources for helping English secondary school students could be planned on a rational criterion. The data from this study suggest that just under 20% of adolescents experience personal problems for which they are likely to seek assistance. In effect, this means that almost ten times the number of students who receive a statement of special educational needs could be expected to seek help for personal difficulties. The average school of 1000 pupils in this study might therefore expect to have around 200 students who may seek professional support for personal problems. This level is in accord with what little data has been recorded for school-based take-up rates regarding personal problems, in Scottish and American adolescents (Gray, 1980; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986).

Moreover, there are ethical grounds for believing that personal rather than statistical significance should be accepted as the more important factor here, so that plain numerical thresholds may be of limited value. While the majority of the students may not have wanted teacher assistance for personal problems in the past, the survey data suggest that many have nonetheless registered the existence of problems for which they

would be likely to need help in the future. This is a fundamental issue, because the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme as it stands cannot validly be expected to meet the reported needs of secondary students which have been highlighted in the survey research. Most adolescents favour one-to-one meetings outside of the classroom, requiring individual exploration of student problems, feelings, options, and solutions. All of these aspects require sensitivity, careful pacing, and an individually tailored approach on the part of the helper. In contrast, PSE sessions are group-focused, classroom based, curriculum-driven, and delivered at a rate which is in lock-step with the school timetable.

Another key feature of the findings of this research is that they pinpoint an adolescent need for virtually immediate assistance, a fact not previously reported in an English secondary school context. This sample of students made it clear that the majority were prepared to wait only minutes for assistance with a personal problem. That time-frame represents a relatively narrow window of opportunity, suggesting there may well be a role at secondary school level for a walk-in advice centre on each school campus. For schools occupying a split site, it appears desirable to set up more than one walk-in facility for the same reason. Given the findings which highlight a student need for same-age helpers, it also seems desirable to arrange for walk-in facilities to be served by peer-helpers rather than by teachers, although an element of teacher supervision is clearly important. However, according to Shell & Eisenberg (1993) children are engaged in asymmetric relationships between generations, with rights and privileges interpreted by adults in their environment. Similarly, the work of Furman & Buhrmester (1985) incorporated reports from children indicating that they experienced more power in their relationships with other children than they did in relationships with adults. These

observations reinforce the argument for appropriate peer-level activity in the context of school support systems.

A more wide-ranging suggestion derives from the clear adolescent preference for friends as helpers. Indeed, given the survey evidence that adolescents experience multiple problems, it seems highly probable that friends will be asked for help. Insofar as friendship is a common feature of adolescence, most secondary students can also be seen as helpers. In its student population, every school may consequently have a sizeable pool of helpers at its disposal. Harnessing this large-scale resource could enhance the availability of student support. Moreover, by educating all of the students in the basics of solution-focused helping, schools may have at their disposal a mechanism for improving the climate of student interaction. Hence an integrated management plan for helping students to solve personal problems might be built upon a three-tier structure, which facilitates the use of support from friends, from supervised peer helpers, and from professionals.

However, attempts to set up integrated provision need to accommodate the finding that the three implicit levels of helping (i.e. from friends, peers, and professionals) are not given equal student support. Indeed, the results of this study show that a friend was the chosen helper 57 times more often than other students, and approximately 24 times more frequently than teachers or other professionals. Although it has been shown that training teachers in counselling skills can enhance teacher-student relationships (Sakahura, Sano & Fukushima, 1993; Tojyo & Maeda, 1993) the above data does not favour placing future emphasis solely upon direct professionally-delivered helping. This suggests that while professional helpers remain important for around 20% of the

students, for the other 80% greater emphasis could be placed upon establishing indirect modes of professional support, for example through providing training and offering supervision for peers or friends as helpers.

Similarly, while the more recent trend towards peer-counselling has demonstrated potential for helping with a variety of problems (Corn & Moore, 1993; Deschesnes, 1994) and has indicated some benefits for adolescent recipients (Gardner, Martin & Martin, 1989; Mather & Rutherford, 1991; Quarmby, 1993) benefits for peer helpers (Dolan, 1995; Kim, McCleod, Rader & Johnston, 1992) or benefits for both recipient and helper (Hendrikson, 1991; Wang, 1987) data from the present study reveal that peer-helping receives even less adolescent support than its professional counterpart. This finding is in accord with the view of Carter & Janzen (1994) who concluded that while secondary students often seek each other out for help, few indicate that they would seek help from a peer counsellor. Moreover, the literature suggests that peer-counsellors have commonly been recruited from amongst white volunteers, which may be a discriminatory practice for schools operating in a multi-cultural society. For these reasons, it appears that helping interventions should somehow accommodate friends as the agents of adolescent choice.

In practice however, because most adolescents are the friends of others, enhancing the role of friends as helpers would require a whole-group level of intervention because of the numbers of students involved. This in turn suggests that a curriculum-based approach may be appropriate at a preventative level. Although the PSE curriculum is clearly no substitute for careful individual help with personal problems, it could nonetheless have an important role to play in assisting students to develop their

potential for helping others. While considerable development of the existing PSE curriculum would be necessary to achieve this goal, a curriculum-based approach could be efficient, for in learning how to help others more effectively, students are also likely to acquire more coping skills of their own

Since the inclusion of solution-focused elements in helping students with their problems met with a high level of approval, it is concluded that this study provides support for the acceptability of solution-focused approaches for secondary students. Further support for a solution-focused approach to counselling adolescents is provided by Littrell, Malia, and Vanderwood (1995) who point out that because of the number of students which school-based helpers are expected to serve, time-limited approaches are needed. In their study, helpers were able to reduce contact-time when using a solution-focused approach. However, they also suggest that considerable skills are required to help students establish small and meaningful goals, and to set tasks related to the achievement of those goals, which suggests that induction delivered by trained solution-focused practitioners is important. In the author's experience however, this is most relevant where the training is delivered by professionals familiar with the schools as well as with the theoretical background and treatment techniques required.

Although the view of the Office for Standards in Education (1994) is that some teachers need to improve their counselling skills, the shortage of time which teachers have to do this is not the only difficulty in creating effective provision for student support. Reid (1989) points out that teachers are not trained to understand such issues as age and sex appropriateness of behaviour; life circumstances; extent of disturbance; type, severity, or frequency of symptoms, aspects of diagnosis and prognosis; links with

mental retardation; classification, unusualness, or conformity. Moreover, Wade & Moore (1993) found that less than one third of 115 primary and secondary teachers they surveyed reported taking any account of the opinions of the children they taught. Indeed, it appears that the education professionals most likely to have the requisite level of training, background knowledge, and skill in intervention, are the psychologists employed in the education service. However, they too have to meet time pressures, e.g. those arising from the DFE Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs, so that the provision of an extended number of individual support sessions may be difficult for any one profession to deliver. This suggests that a multi-level approach may be required to meet existing levels of student need effectively, backed up by appropriate consultation, in-service training, and evaluation.

One of the basic principles for organising INSET should be that it assists teachers in ensuring that their professional time is used as effectively as possible. It is therefore suggested that INSET programmes should include both preventative and supportive elements. The preventative element would need to be set in the context of whole-school behaviour and discipline policies. Against that background, it seems desirable to focus upon developing and implementing programmes for building and maintaining student self-esteem, also for teaching students general-purpose skills for coping with the demands of the school environment, for problem-solving, and for conflict-resolution.

To complement this approach, the supportive element should include establishing both student and teacher-support systems in order to accommodate those students needing help in coping with personal concerns. From the results of this study, both student and teacher-delivered support could be founded upon a basic package of

listening, building rapport, identifying personal resources, and exploring future options and potential solutions. For teacher intervention however, INSET should also include coverage of relevant theoretical models and contemporary research findings, and implementation and monitoring skills, while guidance for referral to other professionals also appears desirable.

Delivery of a comprehensive INSET programme needed to encompass the above elements would probably require the resources of personnel with appropriate background in enhancing self-esteem, adolescent coping, problem-solving, counselling, and solution-focused helping. A conjoint approach by Local Education Authority personnel and teacher-training institutions may be particularly productive in realising these goals.

From the point of view of funding, the allocation of schools' training resources for student support purposes must necessarily recognise that student needs are not restricted to academic issues. It would therefore seem reasonable that a proportion of available INSET funds should go towards meeting students' pastoral needs. In the case of schools operating in areas where the student population indicates a particularly high level of need, then a case may exist for establishing a joint programme with other schools, or for making representations to their LEA for strategic central funding for INSET purposes. For maximum cost-effectiveness, it may prove desirable to adopt a developmental approach, for example by focusing initially on teacher interventions designed to enhance student-level helping strategies.

Although some studies support peer-level counselling approaches in secondary schools, other research, including that reported here, suggests that caution may be advisable. Less than 1% of this student sample favoured other students as helpers, and 57% indicated that they preferred friends in this role. Accordingly, two main suggestions follow for schools having an interest in peer-counselling. Firstly, in those schools which have already implemented a peer-counselling programme, that further development should be carried out selectively. In particular, because of an evident preference for friends as helpers documented here, it would probably be useful to admit future peer-counsellors to their induction programme partly on the basis of popularity amongst the other students in their age-group. One reason for doing so is that popular peers would be seen as friends by a greater number of students, and the level of student contact with peer-counsellors could therefore be expected to increase. An objective procedure for identifying the popularity of potential peer-counsellors may be found in the administration of sociograms within existing teaching groups, although teacher observation would also be useful in assessing the viability of peer-counselling volunteers.

Secondly, for schools which have not yet begun peer-counselling, there is the viable alternative of choosing not to do so. This suggestion is again made on the basis of the predominant student preference for friends as helpers. Accordingly, student support could quite reasonably be fostered by focusing upon friends as the most readily available supportive resource, and setting out to enhance their helping skills, although this would clearly require more care than a simple befriending programme is likely to. By pursuing this option, a school could still enhance its level of student support, but would not necessarily have to set up a peer-counselling system. Moreover, it would be



demonstrating to all concerned the importance of a whole-school approach to student concerns. Of course, the above suggestions are not mutually exclusive, and for schools which have already adopted a peer-counselling system, it may prove possible to run the two approaches in parallel.

The present findings that students commonly have multiple problems, and that a significant number approach teachers for help, suggests that careful planning should be a critical function of teachers providing counselling services, so that their additional skills can be applied where the need is greatest. As far as person-to-person counselling is concerned, teachers need to be aware of a student desire to talk about their problems and their feelings promptly, to be listened to, to receive suggestions for their future options and potential solutions, and to have their concerns addressed in confidence. It should also be constructive to have regard to the findings indicating that use of students' first names, pertinent helper self-disclosure, positive feedback, and exploration of their existing coping skills were reported by only a minority of this adolescent sample. Some adjustment to school-based counselling practice would therefore open up the possibility that more adolescents may benefit from the application of these techniques, and could also help teachers to reduce the likelihood of students experiencing a threat to their self-esteem when seeking help in school.

The data which demonstrate that while students had multiple problems the majority did not seek help from teachers might be taken to imply that at least some professional time should be given over to modes of teacher intervention which are not constrained to one-to-one counselling. Examples of alternative modes of working include development and delivery of a programme to develop student self-help; organising and

monitoring easy-access systems for student support via friends and/or peers (preferably the former); setting up a screening programme to determine levels of need amongst new students (particularly first-time arrivals from primary schools); establishing referral procedures which filter out low-level problems which could be handled by others; and providing INSET for colleagues on communication and helping skills.

### **Weaknesses of The Current Research**

Caution is advised in generalising the results of this research to other populations and other contexts. There are several reasons underlying this stipulation. Firstly, the students involved were early to mid-adolescents attending neighbourhood secondary schools in a single Local Education Authority. Limited human resources did not allow for fieldwork to be undertaken on a regional or national basis. Secondly, the sample did not include students in late adolescence, or less conventional sub-groups such as non-attenders, students in residential or hospital settings, or those receiving home tuition. However, the perceptions of these groups are of questionable relevance for the needs of adolescents in full-time education.

Thirdly, student responses were constrained by a forced-choice format in which no open-ended questions were used. However, contemporary standards of questionnaire design (see for example Robson, 1993) support the use of forced-choice formats to produce straightforward coding of the responses. Fourthly, although students were consulted extensively throughout the questionnaire design stage, after the questionnaires were administered no individual interviews were conducted to gather less constrained responses. Follow-up interviews were not undertaken here because none had been employed for the questionnaire design, and also in the light of studies showing that adolescents are sensitive to the presence of recording equipment which would have been necessary in a research setting (Newfield et al, 1991; Stuart-Smith, 1994.) Fifthly, the survey generated categorical data which made it difficult to explore the strength of association between variables. However, in this instance, where a phenomenological

approach was adopted, it was anticipated that from a professional viewpoint categorical data would provide the clearest picture of student preferences.

Finally, the experimental phase of the research focused upon relative differences in self-esteem, and did not set up a comparison of students with exceptional self-esteem scores, which might have been provided a more rigorous test of the threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis. This is a consequence of work undertaken with routine referrals for psychological assistance, and does not appear to be an insuperable problem, since relative differences in self-esteem are characteristic of the TTSE research tradition.

### **Directions For Future Research**

A number of aspects of the work undertaken merit further investigation. It would be helpful to further the course of enquiry by examining both the consistency and variability of adolescent coping behaviours across a range of personal problems. In addition, little is known about which helping statements or behaviours of friends are regarded as being most effective. It may also be useful, in terms of planning student support, to ask secondary students who have sought help in school what sequence of interventions they would like to be provided with, a question that was not resolved within the rubric of the present research. The results also strongly suggest that the utility of peer-assistance programmes should also be closely researched from a consumer perspective. There is also a place for longitudinal studies to assess the impact of student opinion upon the

practice of teachers, counsellors, and other professional helpers if progress in this area is to be maintained.

Information-emphasis approaches to helping adolescents, (such as that implicit in Personal & Social Education programmes) also need student-focused evaluation to determine the extent to which the topics covered are appropriate to their needs. The development and evaluation of some form of expert-system technology for student support purposes should also prove constructive. This already exists in the context of careers guidance, where computer programmes can guide students through a complex decisions, offering an emotionally neutral and individually-paced technology which may also have a constructive role to play in augmenting personal problem-solving.

More studies are urgently needed to build up a comprehensive body of knowledge about adolescent reactions to helping interventions. For example, the development of knowledge about somatic reactions and self-statements at different stages of the helping process would help to fill significant gaps in the adolescent literature. Given that secondary school students have been found to be significantly less self-disclosing than college students (Snoek & Rothblum, 1979) future research needs to look specifically at the needs of adolescents in the school system. Moreover, it is now more than a decade since Fisher et al proposed their threat-to-self-esteem hypothesis, and, if the results of recent on-line searches are to be taken as representative, hardly any applied research has been reported in the literature on adolescence. Accordingly, work with gifted students may prove instructive, as may exploratory studies with individuals having above-average levels of self-esteem, a task which did not prove possible in the context of the present study of routine adolescent referrals. Given the developmental

potential of the adolescent years, the examination of age, sex, and cultural variables in relation to adolescent vulnerability to a threat-to-self-esteem effect may also be revealing. Finally, future surveys should be assiduous in describing their methodology for replication purposes, and in declaring the proportion of the research sample upon which findings of statistical significance are based.

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## **APPENDIX OF MATERIALS**

## BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire survey, regarding which your co-operation is very much appreciated, is part of a larger scale attempt to learn about secondary students' counselling needs. The basis for this enquiry is that although as concerned professionals we may have our own ideas about the needs of secondary school pupils and indeed are from time to time engaged in counselling them, there is a paucity of information about the perceptions of adolescents themselves, so that the equation of our knowledge presently contains some undefined terms.

It therefore remains a viable possibility that by sampling the opinions of the student population on a systematic basis, we may gain a clearer picture of their views and find out how to help them more effectively.

### STUDENT HELP FORM: SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATION SEQUENCE

- 1 Distribute the questionnaires down each row of students and settle the group promptly.
- 2 Read out the items numbered 1 to 4 on the sheet labelled "STUDENT HELP FORM: INFORMATION SHEET". At item 5, pause briefly for questions.
- 3 Take the sheet labelled DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION, and in PART ONE read out Item 1, moving on to Item 2 as soon as the group has finished, and Item 3 likewise.
- 4 On completion of PART ONE, continue with PART TWO, following the same routine (i.e. reading out the item to the group, having them respond and look up to show they have finished, and then moving straight on to the next item).
- 5 Complete the finishing process as described at the bottom of the DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION.

## DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION

GENERALLY BRISK PACING IS RECOMMENDED THROUGHOUT THIS ADMINISTRATION.

### PART ONE:

1. "We will take one item at a time. Let's start now. Turn to PART ONE. At the top of the page, fill in the correct details for SCHOOL, and the other items on the dotted lines. Look at me when you have finished." (AWAIT COMPLETION).
  
2. "Now I will say the number of each item and read it out, and then you tick your own choice. Work as quickly as you can without making mistakes, and remember to look at me as soon as you have finished." (WORK THROUGH ITEMS 1.1 TO 1.4 IN THE SAME MODE).
  
3. "Look at number 1.5. This time each item has 3 choices across the top -VERY LIKELY, LIKELY and NOT LIKELY, but you should tick only ONE choice for each item. The items down the left hand side are FEELINGS, LOOKS, MIND, BODY, DREAMS, RELIGION, SELF-CONTROL, MONEY, FAMILY, FRIENDS, TEACHERS, SCHOOLWORK, AND CAREER. Tick your choice for each one now." (AWAIT COMPLETION).

### PART TWO ONWARDS

1. "Turn to Part Two. Look at the top of the page, and let's do number 2.1. (READ IT OUT AND AWAIT COMPLETION. THEN WORK THROUGH TO NUMBER 2.8 IN THE SAME MODE).
  
2. AT THE END OF PART TWO, READ OUT THESE DIRECTIONS:-  
  
"From number 2.8, if you ticked "YES", go to PART FOUR now. If you ticked "NO" go to PART THREE. Complete the correct PART on your own. Remember to read the directions in capital letters, and tick the boxes that are right for you. If you get stuck, then ask me to help you."

### FINISHING

- 1 About 5 MINUTES before the end of the session advise the students that they should be nearing the end of the questionnaire. Please ask each student to check that they have answered ALL the questions in each section of the questionnaire that they have filled in.
  
- 2 For anyone who has time in hand after checking their answers, it is acceptable for them to draw on the back of the questionnaire while for waiting for the others to finish.
  
- 3 Collect in the completed sheets and thank the students for their co-operation. Please respond to any further questions which they may have at this stage.

STUDENT HELP FORM: INFORMATION SHEET
--------------------------------------

OUTLINE:

- 1: In a few minutes, you will be asked to fill in a STUDENT HELP FORM. The purpose of this form is to collect your ideas about getting help in school with personal problems. Your ideas are important because nobody really knows what young people of your age think, so please complete the form carefully when we start.
2. No-one will know what you write because you do not have to give your name. Neither your parents, your teachers, nor other students will be shown your answers. The answers you give will be added to the answers provided by other students of your age, to build up a picture of how all of you see things.
3. Students' problems are of all kinds, but a personal problem is one that you worry about and find difficult to handle yourself. It may or may not be like the problems that other students have, but the important point is that it is troublesome for you.
4. Please follow the DIRECTIONS written in CAPITAL LETTERS and write your answers clearly.

There are no answers which are correct for everyone, so you should give those answers which are right for yourself. It is very important that you should be honest in giving your answers.

5. Please invite the group to ask any questions they may have at this point.

STUDENT HELP FORM (PART ONE: PERSONAL DETAILS)

SCHOOL: ..... SEX: ..... AGE: ...  
YEAR: ..... CLASS: .....

1.1 How do you most like to spend most of your time:  
(TICK ONE CHOICE)

Alone       With your family       With friends       Don't know

1.2 How many personal problems do you think that you have?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

None       A few       A lot       Don't know

1.3 When you have a personal problem how do you usually react at first?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

Worry about it       Laugh about it  
 Get angry       Cry  
 Think about something else       Tell yourself it could be worse  
 Don't know

1.4 When you have a personal problem, what do you usually do about it later?  
(TICK ONE CHOICE)

Do nothing       Try to solve the problem yourself  
 Ask someone else to help you solve it       Ask someone else to solve it for you  
 Don't know

1.5 What kind of personal problems would you be most likely to need help with?  
 (TICK THE ITEMS THAT ARE CORRECT FOR YOU)

A problem about your:-

	Likely	Not Likely	Don't Know		Likely	Not Likely	Don't Know
FEELINGS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RELATIONSHIPS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOOKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MONEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MIND	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SEX	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BODY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DRUGS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DREAMS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TEACHERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELIGION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SCHOOLWORK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BULLYING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	CAREER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.6 How many personal problems have you solved without help from anyone else?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

A LOT

SOME

VERY FEW

NONE

DON'T KNOW

STUDENT HELP FORM (PART TWO: SCHOOL INFORMATION)

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX FOR EACH QUESTION)

2.1 Is it possible to get help with personal problems in your school?

YES                       NO                       DON'T KNOW

2.2 Who would you go to for this kind of help in school?

FORM TUTOR               SUBJECT TEACHER       HEAD OF YEAR

DEPUTY HEAD               HEAD TEACHER           SOMEONE ELSE

DOCTOR                       DON'T KNOW

2.3 How easily do you get to see the person ticked in question 2.2?

EASILY                       WITH DIFFICULTY       DON'T KNOW

VERY EASILY               WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY

2.4 How long would you expect to wait to get help, after you have asked for it?

MINUTES       HOURS       DAYS       WEEKS       DON'T KNOW

2.5 While you have been at this school, have you ever WANTED a teacher to talk one of your problems over with you?

OFTEN       SOMETIMES       RARELY       NEVER       DON'T KNOW

2.6 While you have been at this school, have you ever ASKED a teacher to talk one of your problems over with you?

OFTEN       SOMETIMES       RARELY       NEVER       DON'T KNOW

2.7 If you ticked OFTEN, SOMETIMES or RARELY in Question 2.6, how long after the problem started did you wait before asking for help?

MINUTES       HOURS       DAYS       WEEKS       DON'T KNOW

2.8 Have you received help with a personal problem in school yourself? (TICK THE CORRECT BOX.)

YES	
NO	

IF YOU TICKED "YES", GO TO PART FOUR NOW.

IF YOU TICKED "NO", GO TO PART THREE NOW.



**STUDENT HELP FORM (PART THREE: PERSONAL PREFERENCES)**

(FILL IN PART THREE IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN HELP WITH A PERSONAL PROBLEM. .

3.1 If you need help, who would you prefer to help you with a personal problem?

A. (TICK ONE PERSON HERE)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A FRIEND                    | <input type="checkbox"/> ANOTHER STUDENT      | <input type="checkbox"/> A TEACHER               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANOTHER PROFESSIONAL PERSON | <input type="checkbox"/> A PARENT OF A FRIEND | <input type="checkbox"/> ONE OF YOUR OWN PARENTS |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE ELSE         | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW              |

B. (TICK ONE PERSON HERE)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE YOUNGER | <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE YOUR OWN AGE | <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE A LITTLE OLDER |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE A LOT OLDER  | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW             |

C. (TICK ONE PERSON HERE)

- |  |  |                                     |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE OF THE SAME SEX AS YOURSELF | <input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|

3.2 If you had to choose a teacher, who would you prefer to help you with a personal problem?

(TICK ONE PERSON)

- |                                      |  |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FORM TUTOR  | <input type="checkbox"/> SUBJECT TEACHER | <input type="checkbox"/> HEAD OF YEAR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DEPUTY HEAD | <input type="checkbox"/> HEAD TEACHER    | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW   |

3.3 How would you prefer this person to find out about your problem?

(TICK ONE PERSON)

- |                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FROM YOU | <input type="checkbox"/> FROM A TEACHER   | <input type="checkbox"/> FROM A FRIEND |
|                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> FROM YOUR FAMILY | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW    |

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- |                                    |  |                                     |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> BY LETTER | <input type="checkbox"/> BY TELEPHONE              |                                     |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> FROM FACE-TO-FACE MEETING | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW |

3.4 HOW would you prefer to meet this person?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- ON YOUR OWN                       WITH A FRIEND                       WITH A PARENT/GUARDIAN
- WITH YOUR WHOLE FAMILY                       IN A GROUP OF STUDENTS WITH PERSONAL PROBLEMS                       DON'T KNOW

3.5 WHERE would you prefer to meet a helper?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- IN A CLASSROOM                       IN A CORRIDOR                       IN A SCHOOL OFFICE
- IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY                       AT HOME                       DON'T KNOW

3.6 WHEN would you prefer to meet a helper?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS                       DURING LESSONS                       MORNING BREAK
- LUNCHTIME                       AFTERNOON BREAK                       AFTER SCHOOL
- EVENING                       DON'T KNOW

3.7 In what ways would you like a helper to assist you to START talking?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

- GREETING YOU                       USING YOUR FIRST NAME                       SAYING SOMETHING NICE ABOUT YOU
- ASKING YOU WHAT IS THE MATTER                       WAITING FOR YOU TO SPEAK                       DON'T KNOW

3.8 In what way would you like a helper to assist you to describe a personal PROBLEM?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

- ASKING YOU IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM                       ASKING YOU TO TALK ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM                       ASKING YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM
- SOMETHING ELSE                       DON'T KNOW

3.9 In what ways would you like a helper to assist you to describe your FEELINGS?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES) By:-

- ASKING YOU HOW YOU FEEL                       ASKING IF YOU HAVE TOLD ANY ONE ELSE ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS
- ASKING YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS                       SOMETHING ELSE                       DON'T KNOW

3.10 In what ways would you like a helper to assist you to work out your options?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

DESCRIBING YOUR  
PROBLEM IN A FEW  
WORDS

TELLING YOU NOT  
TO WORRY

ASKING FOR YOUR  
IDEAS

GIVING YOU SOME  
SUGGESTIONS

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

3.11 How would you like a helper to assist you to create a possible SOLUTION for your problems?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

ASKING IF YOU KNOW  
A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

ASKING HOW YOU  
HAVE SOLVED OTHER PROBLEMS

SUGGESTING  
A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

3.12 What might make you decide to STOP meeting with an adult who was trying to help you?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

TIMES NOT  
CONVENIENT

QUESTIONS TOO  
PERSONAL

TOO MANY  
QUESTIONS

TOO MUCH HELP  
GIVEN

NOT ENOUGH  
HELP GIVEN

TELLING SOMEONE ELSE  
WHAT YOU SAID

SOMETHING  
ELSE

PROBLEM  
STOPPED

DON'T  
KNOW

3.13 What would you FIRST suggest to a school friend with a personal problem about getting help?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

ASK A TEACHER

ASK A FRIEND

ASK A PARENT

CALL CHILDLINE

WRITE TO A  
MAGAZINE

DON'T KNOW

PART FOUR: EXPERIENCE OF GETTING HELP

(FILL IN PART FOUR IF YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN HELP WITH A PERSONAL PROBLEM)

4.1 When you talked your problems over with a teacher was it because

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

YOU DECIDED TO  
DO SO YOURSELF

A FRIEND SAID  
YOU SHOULD

A PARENT  
SAID YOU SHOULD

ANOTHER TEACHER  
SAID YOU SHOULD

DON'T  
KNOW

4.2 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do to help you to START talking?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

GREETED  
YOU

USED YOUR  
FIRST NAME

SAID SOMETHING  
NICE ABOUT YOU

ASKED YOU  
ABOUT YOURSELF

DON'T  
KNOW

4.3 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do that showed they were LISTENING to what you said?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

LOOKED AT YOU

NODDED THEIR HEAD

ASKED RELATED  
QUESTIONS

LOOKED  
INTERESTED

DON'T  
KNOW

4.4 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do to help you describe a personal problem?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

ASKED IF YOU HAD  
A PROBLEM

ASKED YOU TO TALK  
ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM

ASKED YOU QUESTIONS  
ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

4.5 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do that told you they were trying to understand your FEELINGS?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

ASKED YOU HOW  
YOU FELT

ASKED IF YOU HAD TOLD  
ANYONE ELSE ABOUT YOUR  
FEELINGS

ASKED YOU QUESTIONS  
ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

4.6 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do that helped you to feel more AT EASE?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

SAID THAT THEY  
WOULD HELP

TOLD YOU NOT  
TO WORRY

TOLD YOU ABOUT A  
SIMILAR PROBLEM OF  
THEIR OWN

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

4.7 When you talked your problem over with a teacher, what did they do that helped you to understand there were ALTERNATIVE ways to handle the problem?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

DESCRIBE YOUR  
PROBLEM IN A FEW  
WORDS

TOLD YOU NOT TO  
WORRY

ASKED ABOUT YOUR  
IDEAS

GAVE YOU SOME  
SUGGESTIONS

SOMETHING ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

4.8 When you talked your problems over with a teacher, what did they do that helped to create a possible SOLUTION for your problem?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

ASKED IF YOU KNEW  
A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

ASKED HOW YOU HAD  
SOLVED OTHER PROBLEMS

SUGGESTED A  
POSSIBLE SOLUTION

SOMETHING  
ELSE

DON'T  
KNOW

4.9 How much of the help that you were given was the kind of help that you EXPECTED?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

ALL OF IT

MOST OF IT

A LITTLE OF IT

NONE OF IT

DON'T  
KNOW

4.10 How would you DESCRIBE the kind of help that you were given?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

VERY HELPFUL

QUITE HELPFUL

O.K.

NOT HELPFUL

DON'T  
KNOW

4.11 What happened to the problem AFTER you got help?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT WENT AWAY COMPLETELY  | <input type="checkbox"/> IT GOT BETTER BUT DID'NT GO AWAY                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT STAYED THE SAME       | <input type="checkbox"/> IT WENT AWAY FOR A WHILE BUT CAME BACK           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT CAUSED OTHER PROBLEMS | <input type="checkbox"/> IT GOT WORSE <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW |

4.12 Did the help you were given assist you with any OTHER problems?

(TICK ONE CHOICE)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES, WITH AN OLD PROBLEM THAT YOU DID NOT TALK ABOUT | <input type="checkbox"/> YES, WITH A NEW PROBLEM THAT STARTED SINCE YOU GOT HELP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NO, IT DID NOT HELP WITH OTHER PROBLEMS              | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW  |

4.13 What was it easy for you to talk about? Was it your:-

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

- |  |                                   |                                      |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FEELINGS      | <input type="checkbox"/> LOOKS    | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BODY          | <input type="checkbox"/> DREAMS   | <input type="checkbox"/> SEX         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RELATIONSHIPS | <input type="checkbox"/> MONEY    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL WORK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DRUGS         | <input type="checkbox"/> TEACHERS | <input type="checkbox"/> BULLYING    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CAREER        | <input type="checkbox"/> MIND     | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW  |

4.14 What was it HARD for you to talk about?

(TICK ONE OR MORE CHOICES)

- |  |                                   |                                      |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FEELINGS      | <input type="checkbox"/> LOOKS    | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BODY          | <input type="checkbox"/> DREAMS   | <input type="checkbox"/> SEX         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RELATIONSHIPS | <input type="checkbox"/> MONEY    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL WORK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DRUGS         | <input type="checkbox"/> TEACHERS | <input type="checkbox"/> BULLYING    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CAREER        | <input type="checkbox"/> MIND     | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW  |

THANK YOU FOR FILLING IN THIS FORM

REF:ABB/HEC/SHF