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## Valorization of the Adolescent Personality

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# Valorization of the Adolescent Personality

An Action Research Report  
By Maribeth Brown

Valorization of the Adolescent Personality

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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### Abstract

The aim of this research was to understand how out-of-classroom experiences, such as farm work and service work positively impacts the development of the Montessori adolescent student. The eleven characteristics of valorization, defined by John Long (2001) were used to evaluate how students progressed towards this goal of valorization in the Montessori adolescent program. Sixteen secondary students were exposed to “going out” experiences over a six-week period. Socratic seminar, peer, self and teacher observations and assessments were used to collect data, as well as daily evaluations of student behaviors related to valorization and a pre and post test self-esteem survey. The study revealed that behaviors that fit the characteristics of valorization were much more prevalent following out-of-class experiences, along with increases in reported self-esteem and positive behaviors in seminar. The data also uncovered interesting insights on how peers rate themselves and others, warranting further study on adolescent self-image.

*Keywords:* Valorization, Montessori adolescents, “going out” experiences, Socratic seminar

Adolescence is the time where children transition to adulthood. For an increasing number, this can be a time of great turbulence. Recent studies reveal increasing rates of depression and anxiety among young people in the United States (Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003; Pryor et al, 2007; Twenge, 2004; Twenge, 2010). These studies show rates of major depression and/or anxiety among high school and college students are five to eight times greater than they were a century ago. In fact, “rates of anxiety and depression among children and adolescents were far lower during the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, and the turbulent 1960s and early ‘70s than they are today” (Gray, 2010, para. 4). Intriguing aspects of these research studies are not the skyrocketing rates at which mental disorders are increasing but the reasons why. A meta-analysis by a team of social scientist at San Diego State University (Twenge, 2010) revealed a list of reasons for these increases. The prevailing reasons were a declining sense of control over their lives, and a shift from "intrinsic" to "extrinsic" goals (Twenge, 2010). Intrinsic goals have to do with personal development —such as becoming a “strong and worthy person” (Lillard, 1996, p. 69). Extrinsic goals have to do with material possessions, status, and outward appearance. Twenge’s evidence reveals that there is an increasing shift among young people toward *extrinsic* goals than intrinsic goals (2010).

There needs to be a shift of attitude from surviving adolescence to thriving adolescents. I believe education focused on Valorization of the adolescent is the way to achieve this vision. Valorization is Montessori’s term relating to the adolescent becoming a strong and worthy person (Lillard, 1996). It is achieved through the adolescent work of the heart, the mind and the hands (Lillard, 1996). Work of the heart instills in the adolescent the need for social justice. Work of the mind opens the adolescent mind to new

ways of looking at life and providing academic challenges. Work of the hands helps the adolescent understand the power and effect they can have on the world in a concrete way. This action research project was designed to see how student work of the hands (building, farming, land work), the heart (service to others), and the mind (academic studies and Socratic seminar use) promotes adolescent valorization.

Over 20 years ago J. Long (2001) created a list of attributes that are seen in a valorized adolescent. The characteristics are as follows “joy, selflessness, optimism, confidence, dignity, self discipline, initiative, independence, helpfulness, good judgment, ability to work with others” (Long, 2001, p.69). Teachers have utilized these characteristics as a guide for assessing valorization in Montessori secondary classrooms across the globe for over 20 years (Donahoe, 2001). This action research project will integrate and utilize this list of characteristics in various data collection tools to assess student valorization.

Through my observations in a secondary classroom the past two years, I’ve noticed degradation in student behavior and attitudes year after year. Students year one of my observations were more attentive and less disruptive during lessons, volunteered to help more often, had richer and more sustained classroom discussions and overall came across more confident and capable. I suspect that this change is linked to the fact that the students in year two did not have many opportunities for valorization. When analyzing the difference between the two years a key difference was the number of meaningful out-of-class experiences. In year one, we went to work on a farm seven times, went to two different companies where students could learn and be mentored by adults on the job, and were able to do service work. Year two, students did not get to work on the farm at all, did

some at-school service work (rather than in the broader community) and had guest speakers share about their jobs rather than going out to their places of work. I feel the experience from year one were essential tools leading to valorization of the adolescent students. The problem I am trying to solve through my action research is the lack of opportunities for valorization. The literature supports that “going out experiences” are essential to the valorization of the adolescent’s personality.

### **Literature Review**

Adolescence is a time is of great changes, both physically and psychologically. Between the ages of 12 and 18, a person transforms from a child to an adult; this transformation is no easy task. According to the literature on Montessori adolescent education, this transformation requires valorization of the personality. The role of this present paper is to define valorization, explore the significance of valorization to adolescent development and identify tools to foster valorization. A review of the literature on valorization, as well as literature on identified means to valorization, will be utilized.

The term valorization comes from Dr. Maria Montessori’s (2007) work, “From Childhood to Adolescence,” where she writes that the aim of education for adolescents is “Valorization of the personality” (p. 71). Throughout Montessori’s writings and lectures on adolescent development this theme of valorization as a moral and academic development of the adolescent is prevalent (Montessori, 2001 & 2007). Others in the Montessori community have expanded on Dr. Montessori’s concept, defining it in a myriad of ways. Lillard (2007) broke apart the word valorization to look at the meaning and described how valorization is about becoming a strong and worthy person. She went on to assert that this is the goal of education during the third plane of development (Lillard,

1996). Long's (2001b) definition included the process of becoming a "capable and effective" (p. 69) person. Becoming a more mature person through more independent work and success, based on one's own merits, constituted Loeffler's (2003) definition of valorization. Later, Loeffler (2004) defined valorization as a maturation of the process of normalization and is the concept that the educational environment provides students what they need at each developmental stage. The working definition of valorization, for this literature review, will be: valorization is the process of becoming a strong, capable, effective, and worthy person.

In Long's (2001b) article a description of an adolescent whose personality is valorized is described as "an adolescent who realizes his own value displays joy selflessness, optimism, confidence, dignity, self-discipline, independence, cooperation, helpfulness, the ability to work with others, and good judgment" (p. 71). The characteristics Long (2001b) lays out are used by Donahoe (2008) as an evaluative tool to assess the best practices in Montessori secondary classrooms.

Since Dr. Montessori's speaking and writing about adolescent development in the 1930's, the essential nature of valorization of the adolescent personality is clear. The literature, past and present, is clear that valorization is a critical element of a Montessori secondary program (Coe, 2003; Donahoe, 2010; Lillard, 1996; Long 2001b). Montessori (2007) herself mentions valorization as a key aim of adolescent education and development. In several articles on the essential elements of Montessori secondary programs (both published by AMI and AMS) authors stress the need for valorization (Donahoe, 2010, Lillard, 1996; Long 2001b).

The literature is also clear that valorization of the personality is needed to meet the developmental needs of the adolescent (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Coe, 2003; Donahoe et al. 2013; Donahoe, 2001; Long, 2001b; Montessori, 2007). Long (2001a) conducted a comparative study of the developmental characteristics and needs of adolescents. In this study, Long (2001a) compared the works and findings of Maria Montessori, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Gayle Dorman, Larry Schaefer, and Margaret Stephenson. Long's (2001a) comparative study revealed -- through the presentation of a comparative chart on the findings of the researchers studies -- the consistent needs of the adolescent to develop into this "strong, capable, effective, and worthy person" (p.69) as essential to adolescent development.

Valorization of the personality is developmentally appropriate and is essential to meet the needs of the adolescent (Coe, 2003; Donahoe et al. 2013; Donahoe, 2001; Lillard, 1996; Long, 2001b; Montessori, 2007). There are several interventions that lead to valorization of the personality. Dr. Montessori (2007) writes of the valorization of the personality happening through activities that consider adolescent's moral and physical development as well as academic syllabus and methods of study (p. 71). Long (2001b) and Donahoe (2008) both stress the importance of self-help to the process of valorization as well as the necessity of work of the hands and the heart in addition to academic work. A "Montessori Life" article states the need for adolescents to have an academically challenging environment as well as one that provides opportunities to continue to the larger society and to work with their hands (Celeste et al., 2003). Lillard (1996) emphasizes that the only way valorization can be achieved is through experiences with one's environment. Loeffler (2004) stresses that the curriculum and the environment play vital roles in the

development of valorization. Valorization is accomplished through the work of the hands, heart and mind (Coe, 2003; Donahoe, 2010; Donahoe et al., 2013, Lillard, 1996; Long, 2001b; Montessori, 2007)

There are several tools that have been used in secondary programs to build valorization of the personality. After decades of scientific observation, study of adolescent development, and implementation of educational training courses, Dr. Montessori (2007) suggests that adolescents need to work with their hands. That they should be exposed to machines and working with tools. Adolescent's need a connection to the land and therefore should work on a farm. For the work of the mind she suggests that the curriculum for secondary schools continues to be linked to meaningful realities of the adolescent's life and the subjects should connect to one another. Dr. Montessori driven by her observations of the development of social needs in the adolescents suggests discussions among adolescents to facilitate understanding.

In "Montessori Today," Lillard (1996) lays out several tools that can be used to lead a student to valorization. Specifically, she talks about interlinking academic subjects and work, students need to be free to pursue their own passions. Academic standards must prepare students to succeed in their future lives, debate and seminar are useful tools, creative and performing arts, having uninterrupted work time, having contact with nature and working with tools.

A meta-analysis exploring "what works in character education" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007) supports Lillard's list of essential tools to develop positive character attributes (e.g., independence, confidence, helpfulness, making good decisions, and working with others). Berkowitz and Bier (2007) reviewed 109 research studies and five program reviews in an

effort to identify the most successful strategies used in character education programs. The meta-analysis revealed that the most effective strategies were” professional development, interactive teaching strategies, direct teaching strategies, family/community participation, modeling/mentoring, classroom/behavior management, school wide strategies, community service/service learning” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007, p. 40). The Berkowitz & Bier study stresses the key to success is utilizing multiple strategies and making sure the strategies are linked to one another and the needs of the adolescent.

Loeffler (2004) mentions cooking, cleaning, shopping skills and other practical life work, along with Socratic seminar, group discussions, and group projects as useful tools that can be implemented into secondary environments and lead students to valorization.

Group interaction and dialogue, independent study projects, student lead conferences, solo time, service learning, Socratic dialogue, auto-mechanics, photography, cooking, woodworking, rock-climbing, yearbook and fine arts were all mentioned as useful tools by Coe (2003) in her *Montessori Life* article.

Service learning has been a reoccurring tool utilized in programs that strive toward valorization of the adolescent personality. Shelly & Brandell (1999) researched what impact service learning had on adolescent personal and academic development. This meta-analysis highlights the findings of several research studies on the impact of service learning on adolescents. The synthesis of over 20 studies focused on the outcomes of adolescent service work and revealed several outcomes that link to valorization. Students who participate in service learning felt more connected to their community both in and outside of school, had higher grades and attendance records, “greater complexity in their thinking”

(p.22), higher level moral reasoning, positive civic attitudes (e.g., feeling a sense of responsibility) and greater desire to do good work (Shelly & Brandell, 1999).

In a 2011 study of over 1,800 adolescents (e.g., all 15 years of age) researchers looked at how adolescents thrive (Scales, Benson & Roehlkepartain). This study linked to valorization by looking at how using adolescent “sparks” (e.g., deep interest or passions) links to how empowered they feel to make civic contributions (i.e., a key component of valorization). The study confirms that “positive development experiences” are essential to adolescent character development. The study found commonalities in the programs that lead to positive adolescent character development (i.e., valorization). Successful adolescent programs need to provide adolescents opportunities for constrictive use of time, and need to help them feel valued, capable, and useful as a resource to others (Scales, Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2011).

The literature is clear that valorization of the adolescent personality is an essential component of a Montessori Secondary program. There is also great support in the literature for the idea that valorization can only work if the adolescent is exposed to challenging academic work, and meaningful work of the hands and heart. Socratic seminars or formal in-class discussions are noted as excellent tools for academic challenges. Service work is dominant in the literature on work of the heart and viewed by many as a key component to adolescent development. Students’ work on farm or building projects, such as habitat for humanity, are the most commonly referenced examples in the literature of activities that epitomize the essential nature of work of the hands. The literature is also clear that for valorization of the adolescent personality to come about these three elements must work in collaboration.

### **Action Research Question**

The question that has guided this research is: How does work of the mind, heart and hands impact adolescent's valorization of the personality? Valorization is a Montessori term meaning to become a strong and worthy person. When joy, selflessness, optimism, confidence, dignity, self-discipline, independence, cooperation, helpfulness, the ability to work with others, and good judgment are present valorization of the personality has developed. Valorization is a term often linked in the literature to character development and is directly linked to positive behaviors.

My hypothesis is that there will be a positive impact on in-class behaviors after students have engaged in the experiences associated with valorization.

### **Description of the Research Process**

Prior to the start of the research project, parents were sent an assent form (see Appendix A) the first week of the school year. This form shared an overview of the action research project, the role of the students in the project, and allowed the parents to opt out of having their child's data utilized in the research project. The parents were given the opportunity to contact me via email or phone about any question or concerns they had about the data collection or the project. Parents were also given the chance to ask questions at the opening week parent meeting. The assent form was designed to be an efficient form for parents. They only needed to return the signed form if they wished for their child's data to be omitted from the study. None of the parents of the 17 students in my class (study participants), opted out.

The first research data was collected the second week of the school year. Monday, of the second week of school my students took a self-esteem assessment (see Appendix B).

This assessment was used to get a pre-exposure understanding of how they feel about themselves. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale was used to provide concrete numerical data on a more abstract concept (self-esteem). This scale was selected for several reasons, the first being it is a scale that was specifically design to allow adolescents the ability to self-reflect and assess their self-worth. A second reason this scale was used is its stability. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale has been a constant in social scientific research since it was developed in 1965. A final reason this tool was selected to assess self-esteem is the ease of use. The questions are easy for students to understand and score. Questions have a nice balance of what students would feel are positive and negative attributes that facilitate more honest answers. The Rosenberg scale was used to get a baseline of students' self-esteem at the start of the research and then used again at the end of the research period to see if there had been any changes in the student's self-assessed self-esteem. Self-esteem was selected as a measurement tool because it is an essential part of Valorization.

The first week of research (second of the school year), student's behaviors during independent work time were recorded on a teacher-tracking sheet (see Appendix C). Observations were conducted and recorded daily during the students' morning block of independent work time. This is a time of the day when no whole group lessons were happening. These observation/behavior tracking sheets were completed each week of the action research project to identify behaviors that exemplified the eleven defined characteristics of valorization. The aim of the observation form was to compline a list of behaviors of valorization to compliment the described characteristics, since concrete examples are lacking in the current literature.

Beginning the first week of research, students participated in Socratic seminar discussions weekly. For each seminar discussion, students would complete a self and peer evaluation form (see Appendix D & E) immediately after their thirty-minute discussion. During their discussion, student behaviors and participation were tracked on a teacher tally sheet (see Appendix F). Socratic seminar discussions are based on readings, artwork, video recordings or photographs. Students received or were exposed to the seminar piece on Mondays. They had the week to analyze, annotate, develop questions and prepare for the seminar on Friday. Socratic seminar was selected as a tool for this action research project because it is an academic component of Montessori Secondary programs. By evaluating students participation and letting them self and peer assess, I hoped to be able to see how their participation, the level of depth of their conversation and their behavior in the activity would change over the course the research period. Seminars were conducted each week of the action research project. Teacher behavioral tally sheets, students self and peer evaluations forms were completed each week.

Beginning the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the study, students spent one day out-of-class doing either service or farm/building work. This was guided by the Montessori philosophy that "Education should include two forms of work, manual and intellectual, for the same person, and thus make it understood by practical experience that these two kinds complete each other and are equally essential to a civilized existence" (Montessori, 2007, p. 65). The Socratic seminar, the reading and writing that accompanied them, along with noting observations while students completed other academic work in the blocks of work time were used to establish what was happening with students during academic work times. The experiences outside the classroom were designed to give the students a different, more

hands-on and “real word” application of their knowledge. The study intent was to see if their behaviors during academic work time as well as the depth of their academic studies (as recorded by their participation in seminars) changed after exposure to out-of-classroom experiences.

The first day of out-of-classroom experience was a day divided into three segments. Students this year had an opportunity to design and build a large-scale project for the school community, their classroom community and as a service project for the broader community. Students spent the morning interviewing teachers, administrators and students to identify possible community or charity projects. Students also explored the campus to note areas of the school that needed repair, measuring spaces where possible playhouses, gaga pits or benches could be placed. The later half of the morning, students spent in the school kitchen where a guest chef had come to teach them about the importance of prep work and basic knife and kitchen safety skills. Students were able to spend the time learning how to cut, dice, slice, julienne, and tear a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs to make a delicious Greek salad for the teachers (and their) lunch. There was a tremendous amount of pride taken in their knife skills! The afternoon was spent in service in the primary and elementary classrooms. Students had set up a week in advance when and where they would serve. Students were able to help younger students at the school in several different ways.

The second day outside the classroom (the following week) students went to a 15,000 square foot warehouse to finalize plans, make a list of materials needed, get acquainted with the tools they would need to use for their construction project and met a variety of people passionate about creating with their hands. Students received a tour of

the facility and were introduced to several different types of power tools, saws, welding tools, 3-D printers and laser engravers. They were able to watch craftsmen and women throughout the day utilizing these tools and conduct interviews with some of the creators. Students spend time in a design room, sketching blueprints, researching materials and creating prototypes of light wood and cardboard.

The third day out of the class was a day specifically designed as a service day. Students also had the opportunity to research and plan the bus route that would need to be taken to get to and from school. Students also learned how to ride public transportation. The class took public transportation to a nature center. The center was in desperate need of volunteers to help plant drought tolerant plants, rehabilitate some old trails and hand water some delicate native plants that needed rehabilitation after severe drought conditions caused damage. Students completed a great deal of hard “work of the hands” on this outing and gained an appreciation for the vegetation native to the area around their homes and school.

The final day out was spent in a combination of service, exploration and team building. Students started their day at the senior center, enjoying tea with some older residents of the area around the park who were able to share their experiences of how the park has changed over their lifetimes. Students had conducted in-class research on the history of an urban park celebrating a centennial year. The park, known as the “Jewel of San Diego” is a source of pride for residents. The park has a rich and fascinating history. Students utilized secondary sources for two weeks leading up to the day out to prepare for the outing. The day out was spent getting to research with primary research held in the park’s history library. Students were also able to go out and explore the park to compare

recent photographs and maps to the original maps and photos of the past. Finally, students were able to spend time with a park ranger, cleaning up some of the most neglected areas of the park for citizen use.

The last step of this research process was to give the students a second self-esteem assessment. This form was utilized to evaluate any changes in student self-esteem after the going out experiences.

### **Analysis of Data**

This action research project utilized five different data collection tools. Each tool was selected for different purposes. The five tools deliver data on one of three areas and are analyzed by common themes. Each data collection tool relates to one of the following three categories; observed student behavior during independent work periods, participation and behavior during seminar discussions, and student self-esteem.

### **Teacher Observations of Characteristics of Valorization**

The characteristics of Valorization throughout existing literature are abstract concepts that can be defined but can be difficult to identify through student observation. Table 1 provides a connection between concrete behaviors and the characteristics of valorization. The behaviors were collected through observation of middle school students during their daily independent work period and student-lead community meeting. During the majority of this time students should be selecting work from their weekly assignment lists or conducting approved independent studies. Students also get called to small group or individual lessons during this time. This time was selected for the study because it is a time students would be taking responsibility for their learning and are given freedom to direct themselves as they see fit. It is also a time where their behavior in small lesson can

be observed. At the end of the period a community meeting is called, which gave me the opportunity to observe their behavior during a transition as well as whole community gathering. The goal of this assessment (Appendix C) was to identify concrete student behaviors linked to the abstract concepts of valorization. This table lists the concepts of Valorization, the definitions of each term and students behavior over a 6-week observation period.

*Table 1.*

Observed Behaviors Linked to Characteristics of Valorization

<u>Characteristics*</u>	<u>Definitions**</u>	<u>Observed Behavior</u>
Joy	“a feeling of great happiness”	laughter, dancing, smiles, high-fives, singing, pats on the back, hugs
Selflessness	“having or showing great concern for other people and little or no concern for yourself”	helping others study for a test before doing own work, cheering peers up when hurt or sad, offering to carry the heaviest load, relieving a tired peer even when tired themselves
Optimism	“a feeling or belief that good things will happen in the future: a feeling or belief that what you hope for will happen”	expresses wonder and hope in lessons through optimistic questions and comments, pushes through on assignments when struggling, encourages the discouraged, cheers on others
Confidence	“a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something”	shows contentment or pride in their work, volunteers help, answers, and comments, speaks up for others, makes call to plan outings, places own orders, speaks publicly voices community concerns
Dignity	“a way of appearing or behaving that suggest seriousness and self-control”	selects challenging work, pushes through injury to complete tasks, shows

		respect for life (protects spider webs, walks carefully through habitats) stays quiet in lessons
Self-discipline	“the ability to make yourself things that should be done”	completing work before due dates, persisting in work time when friends want to socialize, behaving properly in lessons and in class
Independence	“not looking to others for one’s opinions or for guidance in conduct”	helping clean, doing work independently, self selecting work, moving to work in away from distractions
Cooperation	“the actions of someone who is being helpful by doing what is wanted or asked for”	helping others with work, keeping group work on task and on-time, encouraging less confident classmates to share getting others to participate, working as team without prompting to complete challenging tasks, strategizing to complete large scale service work
Helpfulness	“willingness to help other people”	noticing and turning off lights and other equipment in the community at the end of a day, fixing broken classroom items (unprompted), helping peers with classwork and personal problems, opening doors for others, showing peers how to use the bus, picking up trash when out in the world and on campus without prompting, clearing paths for others to pass
The ability to work with others	NA	setting teamwork goals and deadlines, working well with math teams, completing projects in teams, making sure the work load among team members is balanced, creating strategies to solve problems, compromising

Good judgment	“an opinion of decision that is based on careful thought”	avoiding destroying a spider web near their work space even when disgusted by it, choosing to move away from friends when trying to get work done, using study guides and planners to complete work on-time and schedule themselves
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*Note.* \*Based on the work of John Long (2001). \*\*All definitions are from Merriam-Webster.com (2015)

Three data collection tools were used to evaluate student behaviors during the weekly academic tasks of Socratic seminar discussions. These three tools were used weekly, over a six-week period. Beginning the third and continuing through the sixth week students spent one day a week working outside the classroom in either service focused work and/or manual tasks. The first of the data collection tools used to evaluate student behavior was the teacher observation form (Appendix F). The teacher observation form (Appendix F) aimed at answering the question: will time spent on learning out of the classroom impact the participation in this regular in-class assignment?

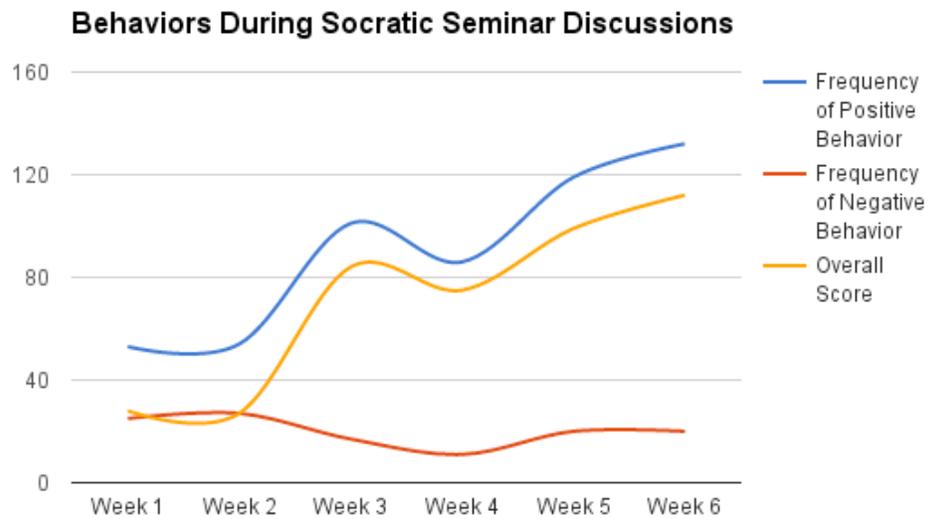
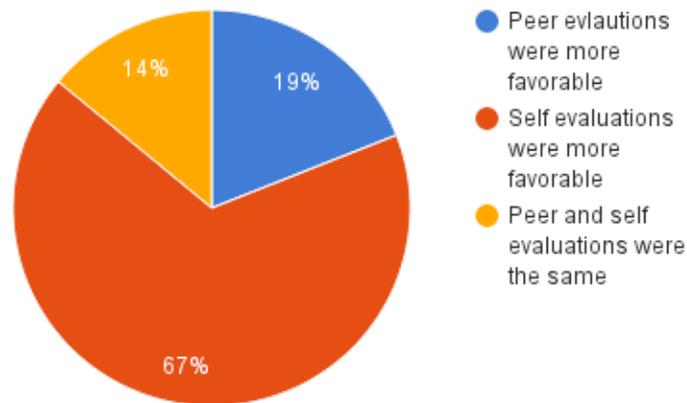


Figure 1. Observed Student Behavior During Socratic Seminar

Figure 1 shows the frequency of positive (on-task) and negative (off-task) behaviors of students during 30 minute, weekly Socratic seminar discussions. A standardized checklist of both positive and negative student behaviors during seminar (Appendix F) was tallied. The responses on this form were coded to evaluate how both positive and negative behaviors changed through the course of the research period. Higher numerical scores were assigned to more positive behaviors, lower to less desirable behaviors. The higher scores represent more desirable behaviors overall. Figure 1 illustrates that as the weeks went on and students increased the amount of course work that was out of the classroom and hands on, their positive behaviors increased and negative behaviors decreased. The negative scores were subtracted from the positive scores to create an overall score (the yellow line in Figure 1).

### **Student Peer and Self Evaluations (Appendix D & E)**

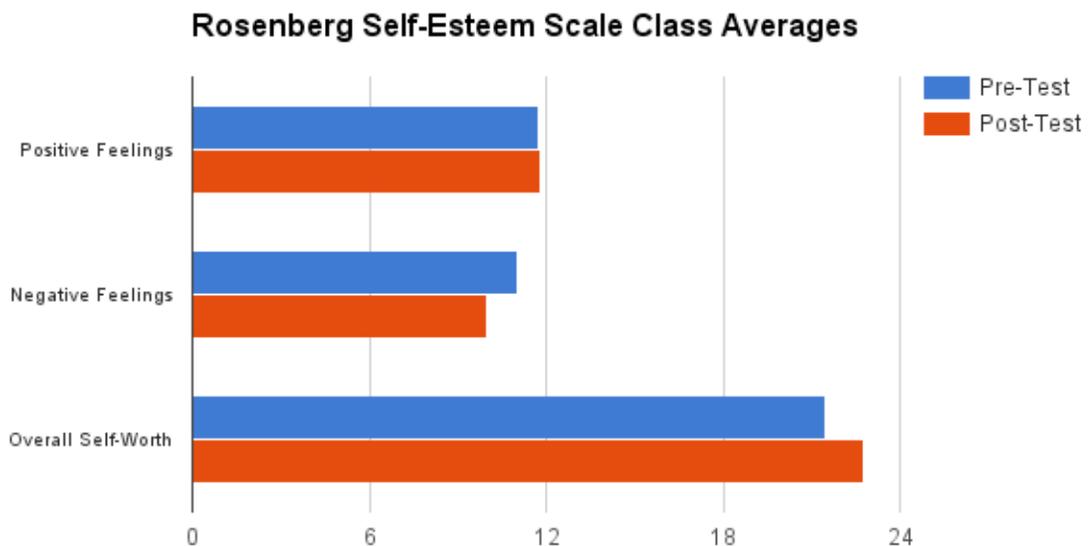
Student peer and self-evaluations were designed to give students the chance to assess their own performance and behavior in Socratic seminar discussions as well as a classmate's performance and behavior. The seminar evaluations forms were used to address the question: Will student's participation in Socratic seminar discussion change as their learning became more hands on and they spent more time outside of the classroom learning and serving? Did their evaluations of their performance change over time and did the way they evaluate peers change over time? Additional insight as to how peer and self-assessments aligned was revealed through the data.

**Socratic Seminar Peer and Self Assessment Tallies***Figure 3.* Student Peer and Self Assessment Tallies

The tallied data from the peer and self evaluation forms showed students ratings of their own performance as well as their peers remained consistent throughout the six weeks. The fascinating insight from of this data came from looking at the way in which students rated themselves and peers overall. The 192 surveys collected over the six-week period revealed a large discrepancy between the way an individual assessed their performance in a seminar versus the way a peer evaluated them on the same scale. As Figure 3 illustrates student self-evaluations matched up only 14% of the time with that of their peer's evaluation of their performance. Peer evaluations showed more favorable participation in the seminar 22% of the time and an overwhelming 64% of the time students rated themselves as performing more favorably than their peers did. I expected peers to be more generous with their evaluations of classmates than of themselves. In psychological studies where people have been asked to report negative and positive qualities about themselves people consistently report having a much easier time listing negative qualities over positive. This data provides a rich topic for further research.

### Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (Appendix B)

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Appendix B) was used to answer the question: will student's out-of-class learning experiences with service work and work of the hands have an impact on their self-esteem? The Rosenberg Self esteem scale is a collection of 10 statements, five positive and five negative. Each dimension was studied separately as well as a combined self-esteem score. The combined score allowed me to compare the ratings of my students to the over 5,000 adolescents who were a part of the original Rosenberg self-esteem study. In the nationwide study scores between 15-25 are considered average. The class average for students in this study was a pre-test score of 21.75 and a post-test average of 22.56.



*Figure 4. Averages of Student Scores Over a Six-Week Period*

Figure 4 illustrates student's average self-assessed self-esteem scores over the six-week period of this action research project. The goal of the assessment was to see if there was a change in students self esteem over the six-week period of exposure to out-of-class experiences working with their hands, and in service. As figure four illustrates there was

no dramatic change in self-esteem over the time period. Students' connections to statements related to positive feelings about the self stayed the same. Students' connections with statements related to negative feeling about the self decreased from pre to post-text evaluations. Overall self esteem scores increased just slightly over the course of the study.

### **Action Plan**

The data collected in this research study confirms the importance of “going out” experiences. The data is clear in showing that the experiences out of the classroom (or in the classroom with out-of-class speakers and activities) moves adolescent students closer to valorization. As Long (2001) reported: “Adolescents’ academic and social work should prepare them to make a contribution to the world. They want to do more than simply join society, they want to improve it” (p. 80). Overall, students in the study improved their positive behaviors in Socratic seminar and decreased negative behaviors, exhibited clear behaviors of valorization linked to “going out” experiences, and rated their self esteem slightly higher at the end of the research period than at the start.

The data collection tools in this research process successfully delivered greater insight into the lives of my adolescent students and the information gathered is inspiring further research. The peer and self-evaluations provided valuable information on how peers evaluate themselves and their classmates. The teacher observations in seminar discussions, general behavior in class, and on outings has given me a new appreciation for my students, and a fresh lens in which to look at them -- the lens of valorization.

I discovered that when looking for “helpfulness” or “confidence” I might find it materializes in surprising settings and ways. One of the things I would do differently in

regards to observation would be to have a second set of eyes on the students. I think that having an assistant take notes on observed student behaviors in different settings and times would add to the list of characteristics of valorization. I also feel that having more observational data would enhance the validity of the study. Another thing I would do differently in this study would be to look for a different way to evaluate self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Assessment Scale did not give a wide enough range of comments for students to align with. I also feel like depending on the time of day, student hunger levels, or activities of the day that student answers could fluctuate on these questions dramatically.

This action research project ultimately led to several positive outcomes. A challenge in many Montessori adolescent programs is communicating to parents and administration the significance of these “going out” experiences. The lack of understanding of how Montessori education fulfills the needs of adolescents through “going out” experiences is often unknown or unclear. Literature shared with parents and administrators to this point has not been fully convincing. Administrators at my school, rejected spending money on outings and frequently expressed concern for liability cost associated with such activities. Parents have complained about paying extra fees for the outings and have questioned the need to have their children gone overnight. Some parents have shared that they feel like they do not need to spend time “working the land” if their future careers are in technical fields.

The data from this action research study will be used to share with parents and administrators, both present and future, to illustrate that the “going out” experiences are worth the price and effort and, in fact, are essential to the proper development of the

adolescent. If the desire is “for all of us to be dazzled by our adolescents – really dazzled” (Ludick, 2014, p. 159) then we need to understand the significance that taking students out into the world has on their development. Adolescents “have secrets we are yet to discover and their personalities are indeed flashes of light that ultimately can warm and enlighten us and the world” (Ludick, 2014, p. 159). However, we will not get to see all they have to offer if we do not take them out to the world we all share.

As a result of sharing the process and findings of this study with current administration, positive changes have already been put in place for next year’s program. There are also plans for professional development opportunities for staff members to learn more about the adolescent program, needs and how they might be involved in helping guide adolescents to valorization. Parents of students this year have shared stories of increased positive behaviors or maturity after return from service work or field studies. Parents are seeing and feeling the results of the activities and sharing their stories with incoming families. The program is building a positive reputation based off of the knowledge gained from this study. Above all, the students themselves have gained and will continue to gain benefits from this work.

At times, I feel pressure to “get through” the curriculum, frustrated by the difficulty of getting chaperones, or burdened with writing out permissions slips and the hassle of “going out” experiences can be a hurdle. This study helped me realize that what I want most for my students comes from the experiences they have outside of the classroom. I realized these experiences are worth the hassle. These experiences only enrich the time we spend in the classroom through more meaningful discussion, more respectful behavior and a more cohesive community. In the future, I will be allowing my students to take the

responsibility for planning these outings giving them a sense of ownership and pride when we complete them. I will begin next year with lessons on how to plan bus outings; make phone calls to schedule outings; and where to research for field studies related to the year's units of study. I feel strongly that by having more "going out" experiences in the coming years and allowing students to have more ownership over the outings, behaviors linked to valorization will increase. I also think that by sharing the data on the aims of valorization and the characteristics and behaviors students are aiming for will help them have something concrete to live up to and model for incoming students. I am hoping the experience paired with the knowledge of the goals of their adolescent education will help them achieve valorization and take pride in the journey.

In the future, I will continue to develop solid "going out" experiences for adolescent students. I am also looking forward to using the data collected on the peer and self-assessments during Socratic seminar to look into the adolescent self-concept further. It was fascinating to find that 67% of the time students rated themselves more positively than they rated their peers. 81% of the time students rated themselves the same as or better than their peers. Only 19% of the time students rated their peers higher than themselves. This challenged me to think about adult education classes I have taught, where peer evaluations were consistently higher than self-evaluations. I wonder, how does the way we judge ourselves compared to peers change with age? At what stage in life do we transition to judging ourselves less favorably than others? What attitudinal or experiential developments lead to the changes in the way we evaluate others and ourselves? I would like to investigate this further by studying adolescent development through high school and

maybe into the college years to see where this change is happening. I look forward to researching the many fascinating questions that this data inspired.

This, action research, project has clarified and strengthen my commitment to adolescence valorization of the personality. It has given me the ability to see that “heart and mind work as one in our students and in ourselves. They cannot be treated separately. When a person is healthy and whole, the head and the heart both-and, not either-or, and teaching that honors that paradox can help make us all more whole” (Palmer, 2007, p. 66).

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Appendix A  
Parent Assent Form

September 9, 2015

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child's teacher, I am a St. Catherine University (St. Kate's) student pursuing a Masters of Education. As a capstone to my program, I need to complete an Action Research project. I am going to study how students working with their hands (on farm or building projects) and doing service work impacts their academic and social development. Valorization is Dr. Montessori's term for the adolescent becoming a strong and worthy person. Students doing work of the hands and heart in addition to academic work are the essential tools of valorization.

In the coming weeks, I will be taking the students to various places to conduct service work and farm/building work. For each outing details will be sent home in advance. All students will participate as members of the class. In order to understand the outcomes, I plan to analyze the results of these activities to determine the impact they are having on students in-class behaviors, assignments and their self-esteem.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of this research and to allow you the opportunity to exclude your child's data from my study.

**If you decide you want your child's data to be in my study, you don't need to do anything at this point.**

**If you decide you do NOT want your child's data included in my study, please note that on this form below and return it by September 18, 2015. Note that your child will still participate in the activities but his/her data will not be included in my analysis.**

In order to help you make an informed decision, please note the following:

- I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate's and an advisor to complete this particular project.
- Please read the attached article on valorization of the personality to see the clear benefits of this study.
- I will be writing about the results that I get from this research. However, none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in my study.
- The final report of my study will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library. The goal of sharing my research study is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve their teaching.
- There is no penalty for not having your child's data involved in the study, I will simply delete his or her responses from my data set.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, (858) 270-9350 you may ask questions now, or if you have any questions later, you can ask me, or my advisor [Nicole Wilcox at ndwilcox@stkate.edu], who will be happy to answer them. If you have questions or concerns regarding the study, and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maribeth Brown

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

OPT OUT: Parents, in order to exclude your child's data from the study, please sign and return by Friday, September 18, 2015.

I do NOT want my child's data to be included in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B  
Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

### ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

The scale is a 10-item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale--from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of over 5,000 High School Juniors and Seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State.

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**; if you agree with the statement, circle **A**; if you disagree, circle **D**; and, if you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.                   | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 2.* At times, I think I am no good at all.                     | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities               | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people         | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of                   | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 6.* I certainly feel useless at times                          | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least equal to others | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself                | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I'm a failure       | <b>SA A D SD</b> |
| 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself                   | <b>SA A D SD</b> |

Scoring:

-For questions 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10 score SA=3, A=2, D=1, and SD=0: Your Total \_\_\_\_\_

-For questions 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 score SA=0, A=1, D=2, and SD=3: Your Total \_\_\_\_\_

Grand Total \_\_\_\_\_

Score between 15-25 are considered average

Appendix C  
**Teacher Observations of Characteristics of Valorization**

Week of Study:		
<b>Characteristics of Valorization*</b>	<b>Definitions**</b>	<b>Observed student behavior that exhibits a characteristic of valorization</b>
Joy	“a feeling of great happiness”	
Selflessness	“having or showing great concern for other people and little or no concern for yourself”	
Optimism	“a feeling or belief that good things will happen in the future : a feeling or belief that what you hope for will happen”	
Confidence	“a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something”	
Dignity	“a way of appearing or behaving that suggests seriousness and self-control”	
Self-discipline	“the ability to make yourself do things that should be done”	
Independence	“not looking to others for one's opinions or for guidance in conduct”	
Cooperation	“the actions of someone who is being helpful by doing what is wanted or asked for”	
Helpfulness	“willingness to help other people”	
The ability to work with others	NA	
Good judgment	“an opinion or decision that is based on careful thought”	

\*Based on the work of John Long (2001), \*\*All definition are from Merriam-Webster.com

Appendix D  
**Socratic Seminar Self Evaluation**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Check off the description that best applies to your subject's performance in today's Socratic Seminar.*

**ANALYSIS**

How often did you participate?

- Too much – dominated the conversation  
 Often  
 Rarely  
 Never

Did you participate voluntarily, or did you need to be prompted?

- Always participated without prompting  
 Often participated without prompting  
 Rarely participated without prompting  
 Only participated with prompting  
 Not Applicable: The subject did not participate at all.

How would you describe the depth of your analysis? (Did you infer/make connections/ draw conclusions/ make judgments?)

- Deep  
 Solid  
 Weak

**UNDERSTANDING**

Choose the word that best describes your understanding of the text.

- Deep  
 Solid  
 General  
 Weak  
 It's hard to know because the individual rarely participated.

How often did you extend the conversation with comments or questions that followed up on another member's statements?

- Often  
 Rarely  
 Never

(Continued on back)

**EVIDENCE**

How often did you use evidence from the text to support your statements?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely- relied more on opinion than text
- Never- relied completely on opinion

**LINKS**

How often did you relate the seminar piece to relevant situations in your own life?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

**COMMENTS (Please be specific)**

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Appendix E  
**Socratic Seminar Peer Evaluation**

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Being Observed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Check off the description that best applies to your subject's performance in today's Socratic Seminar.*

**ANALYSIS**

How often did the member participate?

- Always  
 Often  
 Rarely  
 Never

Did the individual participate voluntarily, or did he/she need to be prompted?

- Always participated without prompting  
 Often participated without prompting  
 Rarely participated without prompting  
 Only participated with prompting  
 Not Applicable: The subject did not participate at all.

How would you describe the depth of the individual's analysis? (Did he/she infer/make connections/ draw conclusions/ make judgments?)

- Deep  
 Solid  
 Weak

**UNDERSTANDING**

Choose the word that best describes the individual's understanding of the text.

- Deep  
 Solid  
 General  
 Weak  
 It's hard to know because the individual rarely participated.

How often did the individual extend the conversation with comments or questions that followed up on another member's statements?

- Often  
 Rarely  
 Never

(Continued on back)

**EVIDENCE**

How often did the individual use evidence from the text to support his/her statements?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely- relied more on opinion than text
- Never- relied completely on opinion

**LINKS**

How often did the individual relate the seminar piece to relevant situations in their own lives?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

**COMMENTS (Please be specific)**

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