

Me, Myself, and I: Therapy and Self-Concept Change in College Students

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INTRODUCTION

- Positive self-concept is highly correlated with positive mental health and coping.
- College students are more at risk of adverse mental health outcomes.
- Many factors have been shown to impact self-concept, including therapy.
- Information on how therapy improves self-concept may improve outcomes for college students.

Self-concept definition: “the sense of contentment and self-acceptance that stems from a person’s appraisal of his own worth, significance, attractiveness, competence, and ability to satisfy his aspirations” (Robson, 1989)

METHODS

447 Brigham Young University students took a survey measuring self-concept, self-esteem satisfaction with life, and psychological well-being 4 times, 2 weeks apart, over 6 weeks.

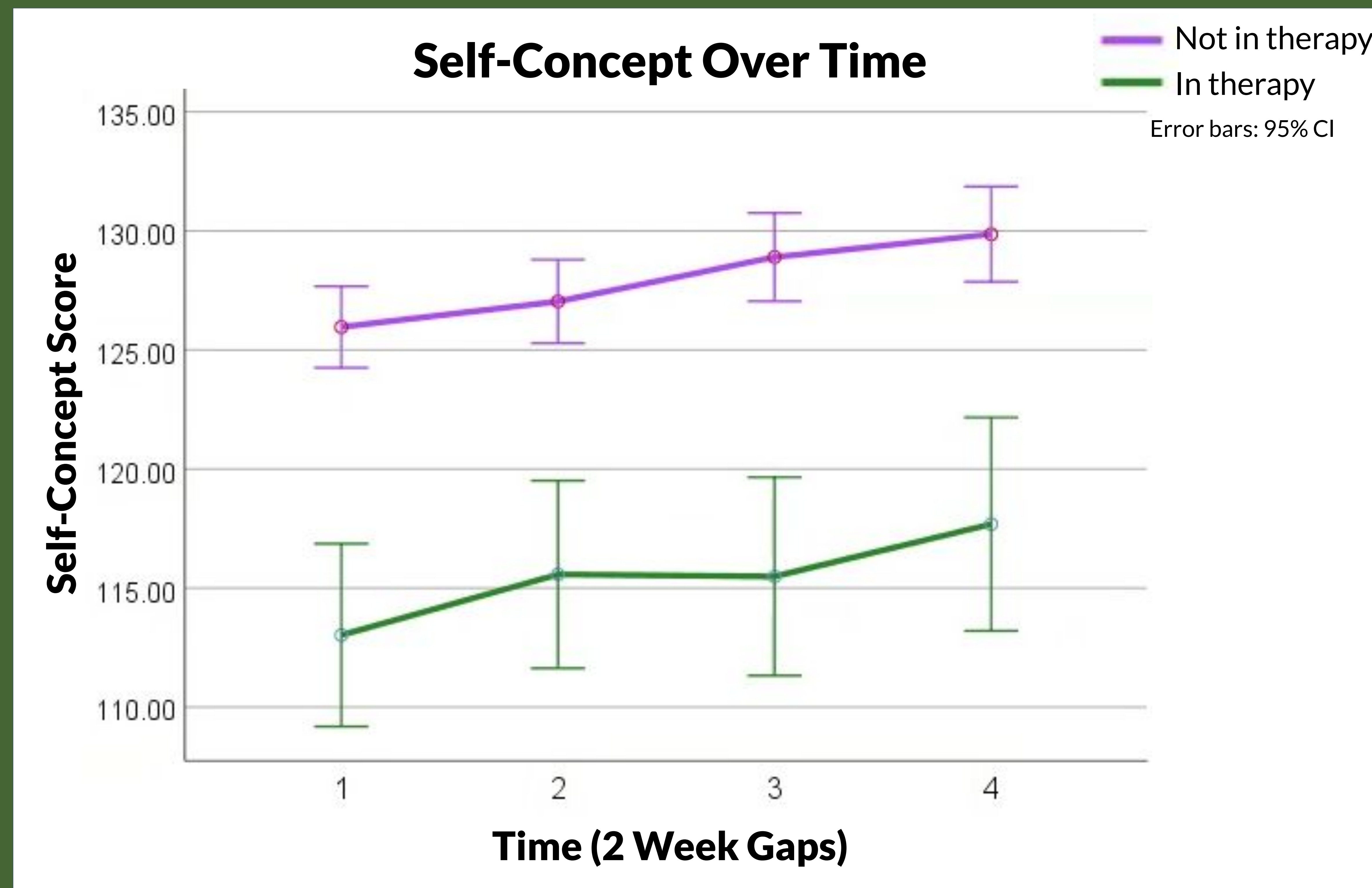
Participant Information

- **Age:** M = 20.77 years, SD = 3.81; Range = 18-68
- 68% female, 88% Caucasian,
- 82% single, 95% heterosexual
- 15% participating in therapy

Measures

- Robson Self-Concept Questionnaire
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Satisfaction with Life Scale
- Ryff’s Scales of Psychological Well-Being

Self-concept, which is lower for college students in therapy, improves over six weeks for those both in and out of therapy.



RESULTS

| | Time 1 | | Time 2 | | Time 3 | | Time 4 | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Therapy | Non-Therapy | Therapy | Non-Therapy | Therapy | Non-Therapy | Therapy | Non-Therapy |
| Self-Concept | 113.03 (1.95)* | 125.96 (.87)* | 115.57 (2.01)* | 127.04 (.89)* | 115.49 (2.12)* | 128.9 (.95)* | 117.69 (2.28)* | 129.86 (1.01)* |
| Self-Esteem | 25.34 (.58)* | 29.49 (.26)* | 26.38 (.59)* | 29.97 (.26)* | 26.69 (.60)* | 30.44 (.27)* | 27.39 (.63)* | 30.69 (.28)* |
| Satisfaction | 21.82 (.67)* | 25.52 (.30)* | 23.00 (.67)* | 26.05 (.30)* | 23.37 (.68)* | 26.51 (.30)* | 24.08 (.70)* | 26.67 (.31)* |
| Well-being | 214.28 (3.82)* | 236.42 (1.70)* | 217.80 (3.83)* | 236.79 (1.71)* | 217.61 (3.90)* | 239.31 (1.74)* | 219.70 (4.20)* | 241.97 (1.87)* |

*p<.01 Note: Scores presented are the mean(standard deviation) of each group (Therapy and Non-Therapy) for each measure at different times

DISCUSSION

- Those in therapy had a lower self-concept indicating that emerging adults in need of therapy (due to low self-concept) are likely to participate in therapy.
- Both those in therapy and those not in therapy generally had an improving self-concept over time.
 - Improvement for the in-therapy group aligns with past research
 - General improvements in self-concept may be due to priming from survey repetition.
- Future research may extend the length of the study to better understand long-term self-concept changes in and out of therapy.

Additional Findings

- Satisfaction with life and psychological well-being were highly correlated with self-concept
- Those in therapy had a lower satisfaction with life and psychological well-being.
- Both those in therapy and those not in therapy generally had an improving satisfaction with life and psychological well-being over time.
- Latent class growth modeling identified six distinct trajectories for self-concept, two of which indicated declining self-concept over time.

