

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

9-2-2011

## Increasing students self-esteem through the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans

Jenna Norton

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our [feedback form](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

Norton, Jenna, "Increasing students self-esteem through the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans" (2011). *Theses and Dissertations*. 364.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/364>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact [LibraryTheses@rowan.edu](mailto:LibraryTheses@rowan.edu).

INCREASING STUDENTS SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE BUCKET FILLER LESSON PLANS

by  
Jenna R. Norton

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Educational Services, Administration, and Higher Ed.  
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of  
Master of Arts

at

Rowan University

May 3, 2011

Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D./ John Klanderman, Ph.D.

© 2011 Jenna Norton

## **Acknowledgements**

To the following people I owe my deepest gratitude:

To Mrs. Reilly and Mrs. Buchheim for allowing me to work with your students

To. Dr. Klanderman and Dr. Dihoff, for your patience, guidance and faith in my ability to be a successful School Psychology Student

To my Mom and Dad for their faith and confidence that I can accomplish anything I put my heart into and my Sisters for lending a shoulder to lean on and an ear to speak to during the more challenging times

To my Nephew and Niece for putting a smile on my face each and everyday and reminding me to appreciate the little things in life

To my family in Heaven looking down upon me, I believe you are each my angel and until we meet again, I will strive to make you proud

And lastly, to all the children who have touched my life, inspiring me to make education a pleasant experience for every child

## **Abstract**

Jenna Norton

### **INCREASING STUDENTS SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BUCKET FILLER LESSON PLANS**

2010/2011

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D./ John Klanderman, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which positive psychology can impact the educational system. Twenty-three second grade students enrolled in Berlin Community School, located in Berlin New Jersey participated in this study. All students were enrolled in a regular education classroom and assumed to be learning at the appropriate age group level. The Piers-Harris 2 Self-Concept Scale was used to measure student's self-esteem as a pre-test and a post-test assessment. The experimental group received the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson plans in hopes that their self-esteem would improve upon completion of the lessons. The lessons took place over the course of three consecutive Fridays. The control group only received the pre-test and post-test assessment. A Two-Way Mixed ANOVA was used to assess whether students self-esteem improved upon completion of the lesson plans. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between pre-test and post-test assessments for both the experimental and control group.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction 1	1
1.1 Need	1
1.2 Purpose	3
1.3 Hypothesis	3
1.4 Background	4
1.5 Definitions	8
1.6 Assumptions	8
1.7 Limitations	8
1.8 Summary	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review	10
2.1 Part One: The History of Positive Psychology	10
2.2 Why Positive Psychology Exists	10
2.3 Positive Psychology: Past	11
2.4 Positive Psychology: Present	12
2.5 Positive Psychology: Future	15
2.6 Summary of Part One	16
2.7 Part Two: Positive Psychology Applied in School Settings	17
2.8 Implementing Positive Psychology in School Settings	17
2.9 Elementary School	21
2.10 Middle School	24

2.11 High School	26
2.12 Summary of Part Two	28
Chapter 3: Methodology	29
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 Sample	29
3.3 Measurement	29
3.4 Hypothesis	30
3.5 Design	30
3.6 Analysis	31
3.7 Summary	31
Chapter 4: Findings	33
4.1 Restatement of the Hypotheses	33
4.2 Results	33
4.3 Summary	34
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	35
5.1 Summary	35
5.2 Discussion	36
5.3 Conclusions	37
5.4 Recommendations	37
References	40
Appendix A: Letter of Parental Consent	45

## List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1 Mean scores for students level of self-esteem	34

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

*Need:*

In today's society, social norms have become increasingly more skewed. Students of all ages (kindergarten through college) are facing challenges that have never been so detrimental to one's self-esteem. Every generation has a story to share. The youth of long ago World War II generation, baby boomers, and the children today face many of the same struggles. Bullying, teasing, poor grades, economic strains in the household, and divorced parents have been consistent through the years. The one new factor that has been added is technology. Although technology allows students many benefits both academically and socially, if a student struggles socially, physically, or academically, he/she may be a target of cyber bullying. This type of bullying is not as easy for parents, teachers, and society to witness. By the time it escalates to a visible issue a student's self-esteem may be shattered. Of these challenges, one of the most crucial problems students are faced with is becoming comfortable with who they are, loving the person they are no matter what the circumstances, being confident among their peers, and reaching out to peers in need instead of feeling like they may be targeted.

Struggling with one's self-concept is a challenge foreseen in individuals of all ages. However, for a child to be truly successful in all aspects of life, particularly socially and educationally, the child must feel comfortable in their own skin. In order for this to occur, teachers must often find creative ways to implement self-esteem programs in their curriculum. These programs can make a crucial difference in the experience a child has

now as well as in the future. Most importantly, the positive image the child develops should radiate out amongst their peers.

Many challenges faced by students include; bullying, not living up to the academic standards set forth by teachers, displeasing parents, developing friendships, and personal issues taking place in the home. All of these problems can slowly eat away at the child's self-esteem, leaving them vulnerable to academic failure and trouble seeking friendships. Both of these issues are detrimental, especially when the student is at a young age. This is when they are being molded into the person they will become.

Positive Psychology is a relatively new field to psychology. Much research in this area is being implemented in the school districts. Articles by many psychologists such as; Kuiper, Rogers, and Markus have argued "self-views had properties similar to schemas and beliefs- constructs that had recently been championed by cognitive psychologists...these researchers legitimized the self-concept as a viable scientific construct" (Chang-Schneider, McClarty, & Swann, 2007, p. 84). In sum, the use of programs that enable students to develop positive schemas and beliefs has shown to be effective in increasing students' self-esteem.

While there are many critics that claim the use of positive psychology in the classroom setting is ineffective, others have conducted research proving otherwise. In the proposed study, the researcher intends to examine these conflicting views and seek to determine if the use of positive psychology in school programs does indeed have an everlasting effect on the overall wellbeing of students.

*Purpose:*

An overwhelming majority of researchers and educators will agree that the implementation of positive school programs and lessons will increase self-awareness and self-esteem in students. Due to the rise in the acceptance of positive psychology, many school districts and teachers alike are examining the use of how positive psychology will affect the classroom experience. The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the affect of positive classroom strategic lesson plans on students overall wellbeing. This research is crucial in the understanding of the roles positive psychology plays in the classroom setting and the ways in which students respond to this method of teaching.

The overall effectiveness of this research may lend support to the notion of utilizing positive psychology to help students increase self-esteem through helping peers and becoming aware of their abilities. Students will begin to ask whether they should sit back and watch a peer being bullied, or if the student should risk getting involved by informing an adult. It is the hope of the researcher that students will learn one of the optimal ways of having positive self-esteem is through the actions in helping others.

*Hypothesis:*

This study will use the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale to assess areas of Physical Appearance and Attributes, Intellectual and School Status, Happiness and Satisfaction, Freedom From Anxiety, Behavioral Adjustment, and Popularity. The researcher hypothesizes that scores will increase for students in the experimental group upon completion of the implemented school compared with students in the control group.

*Background:*

*The Nature of the Self-Concept:* Several psychological theories lend support to the nature of self-concept in different manners. One of the most prominent psychological theories is presented by Carl Rogers. “Rogers defined the self as an organized, fluid, but consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships of the ‘I’ or ‘me’ together with values attached to these concepts” (Epstein, 1973, p.3). Rogers felt that an individual’s self-concept is only consistent of the characteristics that the individual is cognitively aware of and able to control (Epstein, 1973).

Psychologists such as Lecky and Allport “argued that consistency is necessary for maintaining the integrity of the self” (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003, p. 933). Lecky also examined the self as “the nucleus of personality” (Epstein, 1973, p. 3). Lecky claimed personality is organized in a manner that is considered dynamic because it involves constant assimilation of new ideas and modifying old ideas (Epstein, 1973). One of Allport’s main views was that the self is comprised of specific aspects each person regards to be of innermost importance and contributes to feelings of inward unity” (Epstein, 1973, p. 3). In other words, the more comfortable a person becomes with their self-concept the more at peace he/she will feel within.

William James viewed the self “as an object of knowledge he identified as consisting of whatever the individual views as belonging to himself. This includes a material self, a social self, and a spiritual self” (Epstein, 1973, p. 2). He distinguished two sides of self. These sides consisted of; “the *I*, or the “self as knower,” and the *me*, or the “self as known” (Eibach & Libby, 2002, p. 167). James believed the self had unity and differentiation, in addition to being connected with one’s emotions through self-esteem

(Epstein, 1973). These views held by James have played a role in the more recent view of the self as a multifaceted cognitive structure (Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993).

Cooley and Mead have also contributed to knowledge of self-concept. Their theories involve ideas that individuals can look at themselves through an outward perspective of others (Eibach & Libby, 2002). Cooley believed that only through subjective feelings can the self then be identified. Cooley also introduced the concept of the “looking-glass self” (Epstein, 1973). The “looking-glass self” simply refers to how a person perceives him/herself the way others would perceive them (Epstein, 1973).

*Individualistic Self-Conceptions:* As children age into young childhood and adolescence, their self-views begin to become more specific from their undeveloped feelings of self-worth earlier in life (Pelham & Swaan, 1989). “The self-conception identifies a person in qualitative and locational terms, not merely in evaluative ones such as self-esteem. The self is an object in relation to other objects, all of which are constantly modified in dynamic interrelationship” (Turner, 1976). Keeping this in mind, it becomes clearer to understand the older a person becomes the clearer their self-concept becomes. This can have either a positive or negative influence on one’s self-esteem. It is crucial to have an understanding of this because children at a younger age may not have a lucid understanding of their self-concept. This makes it vital to educate children on accepting the person they are.

*Construals of the Self:* The implications and causes of one’s self-concept have been examined for years. “The self can be construed, framed, or conceptually represented in multiple ways” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). There are two main construals of self, Independent and Interdependent. The Independent construal is popular in many

western cultures. This view believes that each individual is an inheritably distinct person (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).”Consistent expressions of stable traits, abilities, attitudes, and other personal characteristics form the foundation for defining and validating the real self” (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003, p. 934). In order to achieve the goal of independence each person construes their own identity in a way that is “organized and made meaningful primarily to one’s own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions of others” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). When an individual is not consistent in these ways, “...self-concept confusion, lack of clarity, or a sense of having a divided self” may occur (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003, p. 934).

The Interdependent construal of self insists “on the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). This construal is largely embraced by collectivist cultures (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003). In order to experience interdependence each person must see oneself “as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one’s behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). “Maintaining self-integrity is not a matter of being consistent across situations, but rather a matter of fitting into the norms, rules, and expectations of particular roles and situations” (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003, p. 934). The interdependent construal of the self is most meaningful when in the appropriate social relationship (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

*Global Self-Esteem:* When examining self-concept, it is important to analyze how self-esteem is affected globally as well as individually. “Global self-esteem is defined as the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself [sic] as

an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7, as cited in Ahmed & Bruinsma, 2006, p. 554). How we think and feel about ourselves is the general way of viewing global self-esteem. “Global self-esteem refers to an overall evaluation of a person in life domains as a whole” (Ahmed & Bruinsma, 2006, p. 554). According to Rosenberg, 1965 as cited in Pelham & Swann, 1989, individuals who hold negative self-concepts are found to be low in global self-esteem when they believe their negative characteristics are of vital importance. However, Marsh, 1986 as cited in Pelham & Swann, 1989 found the opposite of Rosenberg stating there is little support that relationships between individual’s specific self-views affect their global self-esteem. Therefore, the jury is still out on the implications of global self-esteem’s affect on individualistic views.

*Academic Self-Concept:* Since this exploratory study is examining self-concept in the classroom setting, it is important to understand and define academic self-concept. This is “an overall self-perception of individuals in the academic context. It refers to self-evaluations in the academic domain” (Ahmed & Bruinsma, 2006, p. 555). These self-evaluations often include items such as; ‘Math is too difficult for me’ or ‘I am no good at reading.’ Several studies have shown a relationship between global self-esteem and academic self-concept (Ahmed & Bruinsma, 2006). Byrne, 1984 as cited in Marsh, 2002, p. 1, “emphasized that much of the interest in the self-concept/achievement relation stems from the belief that academic self-concept has motivational properties such that changes in academic self-concept will lead to changes in subsequent academic achievement.” Marsh, Byrne, and Yeung, 1999, 1996, & 1997a, as cited in Marsh, 2002, p. 2, found “...changes in academic self-concept impact on achievement and vice versa.” Keeping

this in mind, we must consider the affect of academic self-concept on the student and its implications in the current research study.

*Definitions:*

For purposes of this study, the following terms have been defined.

Self-concept: How a student internally views him/herself and their beliefs construed by these views.

Self-esteem: The confidence a student has in him/herself.

Bucket-Filler Plans: Lesson plans introduced to students that implement a positive way of viewing oneself and helping others.

Positive Psychology: “The study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104).

*Assumptions:*

The researcher is aware that the selected population of students for this exploratory study may not have all achieved the same level of academic understanding. However, it is assumed that participants satisfied the criteria supplied for this study and were able to accurately respond to the self-concept scale and participate in the lesson plans implemented. Further, it is assumed all students understood the instructions given in completion of the self-concept scale and took their time in choosing their response.

*Limitations:*

Because a larger sample size could not be obtained, responses may not accurately depict those of the general population. Because all subjects were of the same age and from an urban population, results may not accurately depicts those of students older and

younger as well as students from cities or suburbs. Also, two different classes with two different teachers may affect the students self-esteem based on lessons those teachers choose in teaching their students. Because this study was performed early winter, the classroom learning environments have already been established and students may not be open to the learning style this study implements. Additionally, due to a time constraint and a short period of time to conduct the study, results may not accurately depict those of a program implemented through the entire course of a school year.

*Summary:*

Research agrees the role of positive psychology is vital in examining the roles and relationship it has in the school environment. Teachers are beginning to implement classroom programs designed to increase students' self-esteem and self-concept. It is crucial to understand whether or not these programs are effective and useful in the classroom setting. Researchers are attempting to understand the ways in which these programs are conducive in increasing self-esteem in students. It is aimed that this study will contribute to their efforts. Chapter Two will discuss specific research that has been conducted and the results of their studies in order to gain a more knowledgeable appreciation of the nature of this exploratory study

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

Part One of this chapter will discuss the definition of positive psychology, the reasons for its existence, and how positive psychology came into existence. Specifically, the researcher will examine the history of positive psychology through its past, present, and optimistic future.

*Part One: The History of Positive Psychology:*

*Why Positive Psychology Exists:*

Literature on Positive Psychology is vast and continuing to grow as Positive Psychology becomes more widely accepted in the field of Psychology. When examining this question, researchers may find there is no one definite way of defining positive psychology. However, within these definitions there are several consistencies. According to Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104, "Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions." According to Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216, as cited in Harrington, Joseph, Linley, & Wood, 2006, p. 5, "...it is nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. Positive psychology revisits 'the average person,' with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving...positive psychology is simply psychology."

Other researcher such as, Seligman and Czikszentmihalyi, as cited in Cowen & Kilmer, 2002, p. 451 believe positive psychology “is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage, it is also the study of strength and virtue.” Frederickson, a researcher who primarily studies positive emotions argues that positive emotions enhance individuals “physical, social, and intellectual resources” (Lyubomirsky, 2000, p. 1). Additionally, he argues when treating individuals’ issues associated with negative emotions, cognitive methods, relaxation techniques, and behavioral strategies all increase positive emotion (Lyubomirsky, 2000).

When studying positive psychology researchers aim to examine the emotions that individuals feel within themselves. There are multiple strengths in studying positive psychology. Cowen & Kilmer, 2002, p. 451 examined three strengths in particular; “front and center awareness of limitations of the medical model, guiding focus on positive outcomes, and implicit belief that the achievement of positive outcomes may, in the long run, be the most sensible and pragmatic way of addressing major problems of psychological disorder.” When focusing on these strengths, treatment plans are nurturing what the best possible outcome is for an individual, instead of merely focusing on what is broken (Cowen & Kilmer, 2002).

Researchers look at how people experience joy, compassion, and raising families that feel fulfillment in their lives (Gable & Haidt, 2005). While positive psychology aims to examine these factors, it does not deny unpleasant or negative experiences individuals encounter. Positive psychology argues, when looking at the pleasing circumstances or stimuli that individuals encounter, the circumstances they “are important to understand in

their own right, not solely as buffers against the problems, stressors, and disorders of life” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 105).

### *Positive Psychology: Past*

During the first eight decades of the twentieth century, positive psychology began to plant its roots. While it may seem that positive psychology is just beginning to take foot, in actuality many early psychologists such as; Jung, Watson, Maslow, Terman, and Frankl all revolved their research and philosophy around the general concept of positive psychology. These psychologists sought that in order to understand normal functioning we must look past psychopathology and clinical psychology (Strumpfer, 2005).

The origin of positive psychology may in fact date all the way back to William James and his contributions regarding “healthy mindedness.” Put broadly, positive psychology shares many similarities with some philosophy of humanistic psychology and the emphasis that is placed on the individual as a whole. This philosophy was similar to that of Carl Rogers (Harrington, et. al, 2006). Additionally, Maslow who researched self-actualization believed “the science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man’s shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height” (Harrington, et. al, 2006, p. 5). He goes on to say psychology has chosen to focus on the negative rather than examining positive change (Harrington, et. al, 2006).

In 1997, Wissing and van Eeden introduced the construct of psychofortology. This construct became a new division of psychology, “in which not only the origins of psychological well-being should/will be studied, but also the nature, manifestations, and

consequently ways to enhance psychological wellbeing and develop human capacities” are examined (Strumpfer, 2005, p. 23). This division of psychology is similar to positive psychology because both approaches aim to study and classify the strengths of individuals (Strumpfer, 2005).

In 1998, Martin Seligman became the president of the American Psychological Association (APA). During this time, he took advantage of his status to promote knowledge of positive psychology to his colleagues and fellow psychologists. In a speech presented by Seligman, he said, “I want to remind our field that it has been side-tracked. Psychology is not just the study of weakness and damage it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken, it is nurturing what is best within ourselves” (Strumpfer, 2005, p. 23).

The field of positive psychology was most clearly defined by Martin Seligman. His deliberate approach focused on “recognizing and building on the structural forces that shape the discipline of psychology, cemented positive psychology’s place through bringing in major research funding, providing considerable research leadership, engaging the wider public media, and attracting some of the brightest early career scientists through the provision of training institutes, research collaborations with senior scientists, and funding support for their work” (Harrington, et. al, 2006, p.4).

### *Positive Psychology: Present*

Positive Psychology is relevant now more than ever. Numerous research is finding positive emotions and adaptability as crucial elements in living a satisfying and fulfilled life. While many forms of psychology focus on evaluating criminal behavior, social problems, and ways of treating serious psychological disorders, research in

positive psychology is finding more frequently (through studying positive emotions) that these issues can be fought. For example, several forms of psychotherapy use positive emotions as coping strategies rather than looking at the negative aspects of the individual's life. These forms of psychotherapy are effective in treating psychological issues (Compton, 2005).

As a field of psychology, positive psychology is taking off now more than ever. The elements needed to make this a successful field in psychology are in place. Courses are being taught to students at Universities on positive psychology, multiple books are being published and the number of research being conducted in this field is growing at a rapid rate. Conferences on positive psychology are being held at corporate offices and school meetings. In addition, funding is being provided for research in this field, and a journal has been created to support the research and theory of positive psychology (Harrington, et. al, 2006).

Currently, positive psychology is being used to focus on the positive processes that individuals encounter during their life. In the past, most research in psychology has focused on the negative because that is what our culture is accustomed to. Gable & Haidt, 2005 provide three main reasons why research tended to focus on the negative. The first is simply because of compassion. As a human race, we are more likely to help individuals who are suffering than those who are doing well. While positive psychology agrees with this importance, it also views through understanding the strengths of individuals psychologists may be able to prevent stress, disorders in individuals, and potentially lessen damage caused by illness (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

According to Gable & Haidt, 2005, the second reason research has tended to focus on negative aspects in the past is due to history and pragmatics. After major wars such as World War II, research was primarily funded for psychological agencies concerned with mental illness and other major problems veterans experienced. Clinical psychology was a strong influence on diagnosing and treating individual's problems. Again, while this is viewed as important, positive psychology is currently aiming to examine personal strengths, connections, and prevention that may influence the greater majority of the population. The research in positive psychology is working to find reasons some individuals are more resilient and overall have a greater wellbeing so that research can be used to promote wellbeing and resiliency in individuals with mental illness and other disorders.

The final reason according to Gable & Haidt, 2005, that research has examined negative aspects is because it is human nature to focus on the negative side of things. This is because negative events that occur in an individual's life are more likely to impact the overall wellbeing than positive events. Additionally, people's brains are hardwired to focus and process the negative events more thoroughly than the positive. However, positive psychology argues that because positive events occur more frequently in actuality than do negative events, research should examine the positive aspects more thoroughly because it consumes a larger degree of an individual's life experiences than the negative events.

In addition, present research is finding support that through the expression of positive emotions individuals experience a greater number of positive outcomes in life. "People who experience and express positive emotions more often are likely to be

satisfied with their lives and have more rewarding interpersonal relationships. They are more productive and satisfied at their job, are helpful to other people, and more likely to reach desired goals in life” (Compton, 2005, p.6).

Furthermore, research is finding individuals who are more positive and express more pleasant emotions are generally physically healthier than individuals with a negative outlook. They are less prone to illness, and have the potential to live longer than individuals who worry excessively. With this new knowledge, positive psychology offers many benefits to improving individuals’ lifestyles as a whole by stressing that the individual strives to reach his/her potential by eliminating negative emotions from daily situations (Compton, 2005, p.6).

#### *Positive Psychology: Future*

When looking at the potential future of positive psychology, Joseph & Linley, 2006, argue positive psychologists must stand firm in their views, make their agenda clear to the psychological society, and stand in opposition to the medical model of psychology or the cognitive approach. If they fail to do so, positive psychology will lose an opportunity to achieve success in future endeavors and will slip through the cracks of psychology. Additionally, Joseph & Linley, 2006 argue that positive psychology must not be seen as a mere supplement with a limited view, but rather stand firm in its views and share its perspective so that it may grow to be a large field in psychological studies.

While Joseph & Linley share a bleak future for positive psychology, Harrington, et. al, 2006, p. 9 beg to differ. It is the view of these researchers that believe positive psychology is just beginning. They acknowledge “we are in the early stages of beginning to develop understandings of strengths and virtues, to grasp and build the interpersonal

and social infrastructures that facilitate good lives, and to appreciate the nuances of happiness and wellbeing, their effects as well as their causes.” They also stress that psychology has taken 100 years to get to the place we know it. What will we discover 100 years from now? New understanding and discoveries in the future may encompass the growing need of positive psychology. What will lives be like in the next 100 years and how will positive psychology enrich lives? These are questions research will seek to learn.

Lastly, Gable & Haidt, 2005 stress the future of positive psychology must seek to understand all of the factors that build character strength in individuals, resiliency, make certain of the role positive experiences have on an individual, and how these experiences influence relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. Furthermore, positive psychology should research the effect these factors have on individual wellbeing, physical health, functioning with others, and the impact held in work environments. Most importantly, positive psychology must come up with effective strategies of increasing and sustaining the above factors.

*Summary of Part One:*

Research in the field of positive psychology is currently on the rise. Researchers are beginning to grasp a better understanding of what positive psychology is. While there are many different ways of defining positive psychology, researchers all agree on one thing. Positive psychology aims to look at the positive aspects in an individual’s life and the affect these aspects have over the individual’s overall outlook on life.

Positive psychology planted its roots many decades ago, but it was not until the late 1990’s when Martin Seligman defined positive psychology and used the theory

behind it to influence individual's and change negative views to positive ones. More research is now being funded to examine the effect positive psychology can have on physical state, mental state, and relationships between people in personal, social, and work related areas.

Overall, a steady future seems to be in place for the field of positive psychology. This field is widely accepted and beginning to become more exposed to the general population. Positive psychology can be implemented in numerous ways and future research will look to examine how this will benefit not only individuals, but the general population as a whole.

*Part Two: Positive Psychology Applied in School Settings:*

Part Two of this chapter will examine research on the impact positive psychology has in classroom environments and the ways in which positive psychology techniques are implemented. In addition, the research will look at how positive psychology is incorporated in elementary, middle, and high school settings.

*Implementing Positive Psychology in School Settings:*

Research findings regarding positive affect in children and youth often report that children in the United States express feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction. Some of the factors contributing to this dissatisfaction include academic difficulties, poor parental relations, and problems related to classmates. Some research has noted that there is a larger degree of difference in life satisfaction in middle and high school students depending on the student's relationship with his/her parents (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

In addition, when researching the influence the classroom environment has on a student's self-esteem, research has found the support of teachers encouragement towards

autonomy, school climate, and academic achievement may all impact the self-esteem students' experience. Classrooms that place emphasis on cooperation and interdependence also experience higher self-esteem and positive outlooks on life experiences (Hanson, Hoge, & Smit, 1990).

The application of positive psychology in school settings is important for many reasons. A main reason positive psychology is crucial in school environments is because the self-esteem movement has had an immense impact in raising self-esteem in children and additionally raising students' overall academic performance. Students who experience high self-esteem often set higher goals for themselves and have the mindset that they are capable of achieving these goals. While students with low self-esteem often await failure. Furthermore, students who experience high self-esteem are likely to persist in difficult situations rather than give up and are unlikely to give into feelings of incompetence (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

One of the most effective ways for a school to function as a healthy environment is if the school can successfully meet the needs of each child and additionally challenge the students to become more successful individuals. As children interact in their school environment, they learn more about themselves and the person they want to become. The beliefs that the students develop will in turn affect their academic performance and their engagement in school participation. An example of student involvement that will likely increase school participation is active involvement in classroom communities and classrooms with structure, goals and practices associated toward positive school attitudes. Schools that successfully provide these learning environments are more likely to have

students that psychologically perceive their learning environment in a positive perspective (Aupperlee, Baker, Dilly, & Patil, 2003).

Many reports on overall life satisfaction in students have found children's functioning goes beyond classification of psychopathological symptoms. For instance, traditional scales of assessing students' happiness often give the students the ability to report negative feelings, but not the ability to report positive feelings. These scales restrict the options available to students. One way to change this in school settings is for school psychologists to incorporate the use of positive indicators on student assessments. Instead of simply reporting risk factors, protective factors should also be reported (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

Another concern in school settings is to whom therapy is being provided too. Often school psychologists are only treating students who are considered at risk or are displaying psychopathological conditions. Instead, school psychologists must focus on providing services to all children. This should be implemented through classroom programs, preventative lessons, and promotion of physical and emotional wellbeing (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

Primary prevention or those in which programs focus on the entire student body are crucial in helping students and reducing their risk of developing later difficulties in life (Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal, & Riley-Tillman 2004). These programs should be available and provided to the entire student population, not just students that are displaying acts of misconduct or considered to be at risk. In reality, every child is at risk for one thing or another and therefore, every child should be given the same treatment (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

When finding ways to promote psychological wellbeing in the student population, school psychologists and teachers alike should use health promotion efforts “that focus not only on developing remedial strategies intended to fix what is already damaged, but also on developing strengths that enhance and protect adaptive psychological functioning, preventing both the initial occurrence of psychopathology and relapses” (Gilman & Huebner, 2003, p. 100).

One simple task of incorporating positive psychology in a classroom can be through the use of “Refrigerator Lessons.” This type of lesson planning involves giving a student a task, having them complete it successfully, and then displaying it in the classroom or on a refrigerator and telling others about the student’s accomplishment. Such simple lessons like this promote confidence, self-esteem, and motivation in children. These lessons provide visual proof to the student that they can achieve anything they set their mind to (Simplicio, 1999).

Another way of promoting self-esteem in classroom settings can be through the use of children’s stories. School psychologists, teachers, and guidance counselors should find a way to include promoting peace and positive outlooks in students using children’s stories that address bullying, conflict resolution, friendship, kindness, and compassion. Reading these types of stories and discussing the outcomes often give students a topic they can relate to and a solution for a problem they may be dealing with in their personal life (Morris, Taylor, & Wilson, 2000).

A third way of including positive psychology and emotional wellbeing is through the use of Emotion Locomotion lesson plans. This program helps students identify emotions and life skills. These lessons often include group discussion, role modeling,

demonstration, and role-playing. Through interactions with peers and guided lessons from school psychologists' children gain a better understanding of their emotional wellbeing. (Burgos, Honeycutt, Linam, McLachlin, Moneymaker, & Rat, 2009).

Another way of improving self-esteem can often be done through the use of self-regulated learning. These students are aware of whether or not they know something and have the capability of completing a task. Self-regulated learning is most successful in high school students because despite difficulty in a task, they find a way of mastering the issue at hand. In self-regulated learning the motivational processes that students go through are treated interdependently. This form of learning is most affective in adolescence because students are now aware of their academic self-perceptions and they can reflect on the thought processes more fluently, thus experiencing a more positive affect (Zimmerman, 1990).

*Elementary School:*

A main issue young students are faced with is that they attend schools that have a high ratio of students who are at risk for one thing or another. Schools that have a large population of students at high-risk often have additional problems to overcome. Not only does the teacher have to focus on accomplishing daily lesson plans that educate the students, but the teacher also is faced with many social challenges in students and difficulty managing classroom behavior (Bierman, Coie, Greenberg, Lochman, McMahon, & Pinderhughes, 2010).

It is crucial to understand that self-esteem can't be overstressed in children. Clemes and Bean, as cited in Wiggins & Wiggins, 2010, p. 2 "found that children with high self-esteem act positively, assume responsibility, tolerate frustration well, feel able

to influence their environments, and are proud of their deeds.” On the other hand, children who suffer from low self-esteem display characteristics of avoidance, frustration with tasks that are not beyond their capabilities, and often blame peers for their flaws (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2010).

Particularly in the elementary school settings the development of strong classroom communities is vital to enhance self-esteem, sense of belonging, autonomy, and feelings of being valued. Self-esteem is guaranteed to improve in students who belong to school communities where students feel accepted and important to their teacher and peers. When involved in classroom communities, students feel they have provided meaningful insight to their peers and are motivated to engage in more classroom activities and learning experiences (Battistich, Kim, Schaps, Solomon, & Kim, 1995).

One affective method teachers can implement in elementary school settings is The Good Behavior Game. This game is a behaviorally focused intervention that aims to change the views of young children and enhance peer relationships. This program uses group rewards to encourage students to behave appropriately in the classroom environment. The core of this behavior plan is to encourage positive relationships between peers and build social skills that will result in a positive affect on students (Bierman, et. al, 2010).

Another effective form of enhancing self-esteem in students was shown in research conducted by Davis, King, McClellan, & Vidourek, 2002. A group of fourth graders were used in a mentoring program to build relationship skills amongst peers, enhance self-esteem, setting practical goals, and assist students academically through tutoring. Results concluded that through mentoring elementary aged students, the

children felt they were provided a safe environment, felt encouraged, and their overall self-esteem increased. Students' attitudes towards school became more positive resulting in less punishment or detentions and fewer absences.

When studying positive psychology and its use in school settings, much research supports the notion that when teaching "social, emotional, and behavioral skills in schools at both primary and secondary level...there is a wide consensus that benefits include increased levels of educational and work success, inclusion, social cohesion, and social capital, together with improved behavior and mental health" (Manby & Parton, 2009, p. 6). When evaluating both social and emotional skills a study conducted by Fox and Boulton, as cited in Manby & Parton, 2009, found an increase in global self-esteem in a group of 9-11 year old boys included in a behavior improvement program. These boys were victims of bullying.

An additional study conducted by Bevans, Bradshaw, Ialongo, Koth, and Leaf, 2008 examined the role of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on the organizational health of elementary schools. PBIS "is a noncurricular universal prevention strategy that aims to alter the school environment by creating improved systems and procedures that promote positive change in staff and student behaviors" (Bevans, et. al, 2008, p. 462). One of the main goals of PBIS is to enhance the school's overall health and prevent behavior that distracts students from learning and teacher's from teaching lessons effectively. This research concluded PBIS had a positive influence over the organization of the school and staff affiliation. Several staff members also reported a positive growth in the academic performance of students in their classroom. However, this statistic was not significant among the overall study. Nevertheless, PBIS is

another useful intervention schools can use to increase self-esteem and positive outlooks in elementary aged students (Bevans, et. al, 2008).

*Middle School:*

Middle School can be a challenging time for many adolescents as it is a critical time period in development, self-exploration, identifying the person you are and want to become, and expressing who you are through thoughts, words, actions, and clothing. While coping with all of these changes, adolescents also encounter issues such as bullying and adjusting to fitting in with peers. Additionally, for adolescents social relationships are crucial. Adolescents need to feel as though they fit in with the people around them. A certain “click” is important for adolescents. The relationships adolescents develop with their peers can either make or break their social identity, social status, and most importantly, their self-esteem (Blood & Blood, 2004).

The ways in which adolescents view themselves ultimately influences their achievement. Their success in academics, friendships, and the ways they portray themselves to society become their self-fulfilling prophecy. These concepts will shape the adolescents self-views, esteem, and overall outlook on life, whether it is positive or negative. When adolescents experience strong friendships, positive self-concept, and academic achievement, self-esteem and optimism will increase (Blood & Blood, 2004).

In addressing issues that students are faced with in middle school, Blood & Blood, 2004 conducted a study in which a group of adolescents who stuttered were compared to adolescents who did not stutter. Their research findings found a significant difference in the amount of bullying adolescents that stutter were exposed to in comparison to the adolescents who did not stutter. 43% of those students with a stutter

reported being bullied while only 11% of students who did not stutter reported being bullied within a period of one week's time. This coincides with other research that has found adolescents with disabilities are more likely to report being victims of bullying than typical adolescents (Blood & Blood, 2004).

Additionally, adolescents who stutter reported lower self-esteem than adolescents who do not stutter. Research concludes bullies specifically go after students with some type of disability or quality that sets them apart from the norm. Due to poor communication skills in adolescents who stutter they become a targeted minority to bullies, more likely to experience bullying in school, and more likely to view themselves in a negative light (Blood & Blood, 2004).

Akhurst, Richards, & Rivers, 2008 sought to examine the use of positive psychology intervention programs in a group of middle school students to assess whether intervention would influence the amount of bullying in the school setting. The program lasted 9 weeks and teachers were given the appropriate lesson plans to implement with their students. Each lesson focused on the following qualities: optimism, team spirit, empathy, amiability, social acceptance, fairness, altruism, and patience. As a result of the positive psychology intervention plan, students reported an immense reduction in the amount of times they experienced bullying. Overall, 70.6% of students reported that they had not been bullied at all within the last two weeks and 79.2% of students reported that they had not experienced any name calling within the last two weeks. The results of this study indicate that positive psychology interventions and lesson plans do in fact influence the experiences students face while attending school (Akhurst, et. al, 2008)

In a study conducted by Nelson, as cited in Hanson, et. al, 1990 seventh and eighth grade students were studied. Reporting's from these students found the relationship between the teacher and student had an effect on the self-esteem of the adolescent. For instance, students with teachers involved in their studies, supported the decisions of the students, and emphasized organization in the classroom were more respected by the adolescents and they experienced higher academic self-esteem.

*High School:*

Research has found social contexts have a strong influence over an individual's self-esteem. For high school students their school or social context and their relationships with their teachers and peers are a strong predictor of whether or not the students will have positive self-esteem. Additionally, because high school consumes a large portion of students' lives, the experiences these students have can affect their individualized self-concept long beyond the high school years. In high school, it is common for students to compare their academic abilities to those of their peers. These social comparisons impact the way students view themselves, whether in a more positive way, or a negative manner (Bachman & O'Malley, 1986).

Some students attribute their self-esteem to a negative locus of control. These students will associate their successes and failures to the type of day they are having. Students with this attitude often say the amount of time they spend studying will not impact the grade they will receive on a test or they will attribute their poor grades to a teacher that they believe does not like them. One way to improve students' self-esteem is by implementing high school programs that focus on developing a positive locus of control (Bataineh, Ishak, Majzub, & Rahman, 2009).

In a study conducted by Bradshaw, Ialongo, Kellam, and Zmuda, 2009, researchers followed a group of first graders through their school experience all the way up until the students turned 19. These students participated in a classroom centered (CC) or Family-School Partnership program. The Good Behavior game served as an assessment in self-esteem for students through school. Results found that students who were exposed to CC interventions achieved better grades, were more likely to graduate from high school, and continue on to college. Students who were not exposed to these positive behavioral interventions achieved less and were less motivated to graduate from high school and go to college. These results would leave one to believe that positive interventions, academic programs geared towards improving self-esteem and positive thinking are successful tools in making students view themselves in a positive manner and believe that they are capable of achieving great things (Bradshaw, et. al, 2009).

Lastly, studies have found school wide primary prevention strategies favorable for high school students. For example, Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, as cited in Lane, Robertson, Rogers, & Wehby, 2007 found positive behavioral strategies (PBS) lead to a decrease in the number of times high school students are sent to an office for disciplinary purposes. Furthermore, Metzler, et. al.; Shapiro et. al, as cited in Lane, et. al, 2007 found lower levels of aggression in high school students who participated in primary prevention. It is important for school wide PBS to be implemented with high school students who display at-risk behaviors as well as those who suffer unique pressures. Students with these issues often improve based on PBS exposure (Bohanon, Carney, Culos, Fenning, Harris, Hicks, Kasper, Minnis-Kim, Moroz, Pigott, & Sailor, 2006).

*Summary of Part Two:*

The use of positive psychology in school settings is becoming increasingly prevalent in student populations across America and within all age groups. Elementary schools are beginning to understand the positive effect positive thinking lessons and classroom communities have on the students' self-esteem. In middle school and high school PBS is being implemented to change negative views and improve the ways students view themselves academically, socially, and in comparison to peers.

All in all, techniques used to increase self-esteem in students are proving to be effective. When used appropriately, these strategies can change the views students hold of the person they are and the goals they wish to accomplish. Research in this field is still relatively new, but holds a promising future for the field of positive psychology and the achievements made possible through this field of study.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### *Introduction:*

Chapter III examines the participants involved in this study. The type of design used in this study is explained and the variables are discussed. In addition, the reliability and validity of measures exhausted is expounded upon and the procedures applied are considered. Lastly, the researcher looks at the analysis used in conducting this study.

#### *Sample:*

Participants in this study consisted of twenty-three regular education students. Students attended a school located in Southern, New Jersey and were selected because they were enrolled in second grade and academically performed at grade level. Due to the format of this study and the type of experiment implemented, the researcher required students to be 7-8 years old. Students were not discriminated against based on gender and thirteen males and ten females participated.

#### *Measurement:*

The Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale served as the main source of measurement in this study and was completed by the second grade students participating in the study. One group of students served as the experimental group and the second group of students served as the control group, thus making two independent variables. The self-concept scores obtained served as the dependent variable.

The Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale combines participants' responses on six domain scales; Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School

Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) to assess self-concept. Students who score highly in these areas are considered to have a positive self-concept. For example, students who score high in FRE are generally unaffected with unpleasant mood states, fear, sadness, and worry. Children who score above average in BEH view themselves as well behaved and able to comply with school and household rules. Finally, students who score high in HAP assess themselves and their life circumstances in a positive manner. These students report feelings of cheerfulness, satisfaction, and the ability to get along with peers.

*Hypothesis:*

Students in the control group will report no significant difference between pre-test and post-test assessment of the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Students in the experimental group will experience an increase in positive self-report measurements of self-concept upon completion of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans.

*Design:*

This study consisted of two independent samples: the second grade students who received the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans and the second grade students who served as a control by taking the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept scale as a pre and post-test despite receiving the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans.

The researcher provided a letter to the parents or guardian of the students explaining the nature of the study, instructions to ensure confidentiality, and an informed consent form. Parents were given one week to return the signed form of consent to the classroom teacher. Upon completion of the informed consent, the control group received

the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale two times, exactly three weeks apart. Students were read each question on the assessment and told to carefully fill in the answer that most appropriately matched their feelings.

The experimental group was given the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept scale on the same days as the control group. Students were given the exact same directions and were read each question on the assessment. After the pre-test assessment these students received the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans included in Appendix A. The lessons were taught to these students on three consecutive Fridays in about forty-five minutes to approximately one hour. Upon completion of all the lessons introduced to students, the Piers Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale was distributed a second and final time to the experimental group.

*Analysis:*

This study examined self-concept, as measured with the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale, of general education second grade students that may contribute to the overall attitude of self-concept in students.

A two-way mixed ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The discussion of results will review the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale to give insight as to what other factors may contribute to the overall evaluation of the students' self-concept as well as provide insight for further exploration.

*Summary:*

Employing the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale, this study assesses the contributing traits to students self-concept enrolled at Berlin Community School to determine whether the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans do indeed

increase positive self-concept in second grade students. A two-way mixed ANOVA was used to analyze the data. Chapter Four will encompass an analysis and interpretation of the data, while Chapter Five will discuss implications, limitations, and future research to be conducted in this area.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine how the use of positive psychology can be implemented in the school setting to improve the overall wellbeing of children. It was hoped that the results of the study would lend support to a better understanding of the impact positive psychology lesson plans can have on students in the school setting. Additional goals of this study included encouraging students to become more aware of their feelings and the feelings of their classmates.

#### *Restatement of the Hypotheses:*

Students in the control group will report no significant difference between pre-test and post-test assessment of the Piers-Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Students in the experimental group will experience an increase in positive self-report measurements of self-concept upon completion of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans.

#### *Results:*

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test the relationship between overall self-esteem amongst students in the control and experimental group. The significance level for this experiment was set at .05. The students were placed as the fixed factors, while self-esteem was the dependent variable. Self-esteem did not significantly increase amongst pre-test and post-test assessment of students in both the control and experimental group,  $F(1, 21) = 0.166, p = .688$ . Additionally, a significant main effect for self-esteem amongst participants was not found,  $F(1, 21) = .026, p = .613$ . One interesting, but not significant result of this study was the mean average for students

in the experimental group, which did increase from pre-test to post-test assessment (See Table 1).

**Descriptive Statistics**

Group		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre	1	53.8333	8.46204	12
	2	56.9091	9.90409	11
	Total	55.3043	9.10262	23
Post	1	54.9167	11.63426	12
	2	55.3636	13.25347	11
	Total	55.1304	12.14797	23

Table 1 Mean Scores for Students Level of Self-Esteem

*Summary:*

Twenty-Three second grade students enrolled in regular education classes at a Southern New Jersey School participated in the study. Students overall self-esteem was assessed by the Piers-Harris 2 Self-Concept Scale and was analyzed using a Two-way Mixed ANOVA as a means to determine if students self-esteem increased after completion of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans. The Piers-Harris 2 was chosen because previous research has indicated it to be an appropriate measure for students receiving second grade curriculum. Results indicated no significant difference among self-esteem between pre-test and post-test assessment for students in the control group and experimental group. However, while the results of this study were not significant, there was a slight increase of overall self-esteem for students in the experimental group.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

#### *Summary of Chapters One through Four:*

Students of all ages struggle daily with bullying, teasing, economic strain on the household, divorced parents, and so forth. The problems these students encounter have a profound influence on one's self-esteem. As a result, teachers must work more diligently now than ever before to encourage students to feel comfortable in their own skin. Teachers should implement creative and positive teaching strategies within their curriculum to boost the self-esteem of students. The purpose of this study was to examine the affect of positive classroom strategic lesson plans on students overall wellbeing.

The researcher measured self-esteem using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale to assess overall levels of self-esteem. It was hypothesized that scores will increase for students in the experimental group upon completion of the implemented school lessons compared with the students in the control group.

Participants in this study consisted of twenty-three regular education students enrolled at Berlin Community School, Berlin New Jersey. These students were 7-8 years old and selected because they performed academically on grade level. Self-esteem was measured using a Two-Way Mixed ANOVA. Results of the study concluded no significant difference among self-esteem between pre-test and post-test assessment for students in both the control and experimental group. Despite no significant difference, it is interesting to note that there was a slight increase of the mean for overall self-esteem for students in the experimental group.

*Discussion:*

In general, the results of this study while not significant are encouraging. Although there was no significant increase in self-esteem amongst students in the experimental group it should be taken into consideration that the number of students in the study was insignificant. Twenty-three students is hardly a large enough sample to determine whether self-esteem can be increased with the use of strategic lesson plans. Furthermore, it is imperative to note that due to time constraints this study took place over three short weeks whereas students received the lesson plans once a week for approximately forty-five minutes to one hour and the students were receiving the lesson directly after having lunch and recess. As a result, students were often hyper and had difficulty settling back into the routine of classroom work.

Given the circumstances, the data collected from this study should not be generalized across a larger population of students. First, the population used for this study consisted of twenty-three students, twelve of which received the implemented lesson plans, eleven of which took part in the control group. Additionally, this study was conducted in a suburban setting. Due to the different stresses and the nature of other locations such as urban and rural settings, the results may vary according to the location in which students attend school. For instance, students who attend school in a location known for high crime rates, large population, drug-use, and suicide may experience lower levels of self-esteem than students residing in less populated, lower crime rate, and lower drug use locations. Furthermore, while ethnic and cultural background was not taken into consideration for this study the majority of the students were Caucasian. This was primarily due to the location the students reside in. Because students of varying

ethnicities and cultural backgrounds may experience different lifestyles the results of this study should not be generalized across ethnic and cultural groups.

*Conclusions:*

The results of the Piers-Harris Self-concept Scale did not find a significant increase in self-esteem amongst students who received the implemented lesson plans, indicating that higher self-esteem cannot be derived from positive and strategic lessons. However, while the researcher attempted to use the scale in a clear and effective manner, the style and format of the questions are widely open to individual interpretation, which may cause discrepancies.

In addition, it is possible that the use of a questionnaire consisting of sixty statements may have been too time consuming for students to answer all questions appropriately with consideration, thought, and care. Further, the researcher did not screen any of the students in the sample for the educational level they could perform at in addition to lifestyles at home such as; whether their parents are married, divorced, separated, or if their family is struggling economically, as all of these factors can have a profound affect on one's level of self-esteem.

Lastly, due to the small population size of twenty-three participants, twelve in the experimental group and eleven in the control group, no grand generalizations should be made at this time in regard to the current findings of this study as well as research concluded from previous studies.

*Recommendations:*

Exploration of positive psychology and its use in the school setting is still relatively new. While research has previously been conducted on ways of positively

implementing school programs and curriculum aided in assisting students achieve high levels of self-esteem, a great deal of research is still needed. Some research has concluded that positive psychology can be used in schools to help students gain greater self-esteem, the method(s) which is most suitable in doing so has yet to be determined.

Future research should look at other methods of achieving self-esteem and how these methods can be used in assisting students. Previous research has focused on developing strong classroom communities as noted in Battistich, et. al, 1995. Other research has examined the role of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and its use in enhancing the school's overall health and prevention of negative behaviors (Bevans, et. al, 2008). These areas of interest should be further examined in school settings in all areas with varying ethnic and cultural students.

Research should consist of a large sample of students, preferably an entire school of students. These students should be exposed to the implementation of varying degrees of levels and program of positive psychology interventions and should experience the exposure for an entire school year as opposed to three weeks of an activity lasting forty-five minutes to an hour.

While the Piers-Harris Self-concept scale has been proven as an effective means in measuring one's self-esteem, the methods used to measure the level of self-esteem should be adequate to their educational level so that they understand all of the questions being asked and answer them appropriately. Additionally the method used as measurement should be length and time appropriate for the students. The longer the assessment takes, the shorter amount of patience students exhibit.

Finally, future research should include preparatory courses and/or conferences for teachers to assist them in applying the intervention appropriately and effectively.

Teachers should be knowledgeable in the area of the intervention strategy and able to carry out the strategy through the year. Teachers may incorporate a positive reward system as students learn and gain experience through the lesson plans and strive to achieve the optimal level of self-esteem.

## References

- Ahmed, W, Bruinsma, M. (2006). A Structural Model of Self-Concept, Autonomous Motivation and Academic Performance in Cross-cultural Perspective. *Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 4*(3)
- Akhurst, J., Richards, A., Rivers, I. (2008). A Positive Psychology Approach to Tackling Bullying in Secondary Schools: A Comparative Evaluation. *Educational and Child Psychology, 25*(2)
- Aupperlee, J., Baker, J., Dilly, L., Patil, S. (2003). The Developmental Context of School Satisfaction: Schools as Psychologically Healthy Environments. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*(2)
- Bachman, J., O'Malley, P. (1986). Self-Concepts, Self-Esteem, and Educational Experiences: The Frog Pond Revisited (Again). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(1)
- Bataineh, M., Ishak, N., Majzub, R., Rahman, S. (2009). The Relationship between Locus of Control and Academic Achievement and Gender in a selected Higher Education Institution in Jordan. *Proceedings of the 8th WSEAS International Conference on Education and Educational Technology*
- Battistich, V., Kim, D., Schaps, E., Soloman, D., Watson, M. (1995). Schools as Communities, Poverty Levels of Student Populations, and Students' Attitudes, Motives, and Performance: A Multilevel Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3)
- Baumeister, R., Campbell, J., Krueger, J., Vohs, K. (2003) Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 4*(1)

- Bevans, K., Bradshaw, C., Ialongo, N., Koth, C., Leaf, P. (2008). The Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on the Organizational Health of Elementary Schools. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 23(4), doi: 10.1037/a0012883
- Bierman, K., Coie, J., Greenberg, M., Lochman, J., McMahon, R., Pinderhughes, E. (2010). The Effects of a Multiyear Universal Social-Emotional Learning Program: The Role of Student and School Characteristics. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*. 78(2), doi: 10.1037/a0018607
- Blood, G., Blood, I. (2004). Bullying in Adolescents Who Stutter: Communicative Competence and Self-Esteem. *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders*, 31, doi:1092-5171/04/3101-0069
- Bohanon, H., Carney, K., Culos, C., Fenning, P., Hariss, S., Hicks, K., Kasper, B., Minnis-Kim, M., Moroz, K., Pigott, T., Sailor, S. (2006). School-wide Application of Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8(3)
- Bradshaw, C, Ialongo, N., Kellam, S., Zmuda, J. (2009). Longitudinal Impact of Two Universal Preventive Interventions in First Grade on Educational Outcomes in High School. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(4), doi:10.1037/a0016586
- Burgos, T., Honeycutt, H., Linam, E., McLachlin, D., Moneymaker, L., Rat, M. (2009). Emotion Locomotion: Promoting the Emotional Health of Elementary School Children by Recognizing Emotions. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 25(373), doi: 10.1177/1059840509339738

- Chang-Sneider, C, McClarty, K, Swann, W. (2007). Do People's Self-Views Matter?: Self-Concept and Self-Esteem in Everyday Life. *American Psychologist Association*, 62(2), doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.62.2.84
- Clonan, S., Chafouleas, S., McDougal, J., Riley-Tillman, T. (2004). Positive Psychology Goes to School: Are We There Yet? *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(1), doi: 10.1002/pits.10142
- Compton, W. (2005). *Introduction to Positive Psychology*. Belmont: Thompson and Wadsworth.
- Cowan, E., Kilmer, R. (2002). Positive Psychology: Some Plusses and Some Open Issues. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(4), doi: 10.1002/jcop.10014
- Cross, S, Gore, J, Morris, M. (2003). The Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal, Self-Concept Consistency, and Well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(5), doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.933
- Davis, B., King, K., McClellan, W., Vidourek, R. (2002). Increasing Self-Esteem and School Connectedness Through a Multidimensional Mentoring Program. *Journal of School Health*, 72(7)
- Donahue, E, John, O, Roberts, B, Robins, R. (1993) The Divided Self: Concurrent and Longitudinal Effects of Psychological Adjustment and Social Roles on Self-Concept Differentiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(5), doi: 0022-3514/93/\$3.00
- Eibach, R, & Libby, L. (2002). Looking Back in Time: Self-Concept Changes Affects Visual Perspective in Autobiographical Memory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(2), doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.82.2.167

- Epstein, S. (1973). The Self-Concept Revisited: Or a Theory of a Theory. *American Psychologist*, 28.
- Gable, S., & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and Why) is Positive Psychology?. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.103
- Hanson, S., Hoge, D., Smit, E. (1990). School Experiences Predicting Changes in Self-Esteem of Sixth and Seventh-Grade Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(1), doi:0022-0663/90/\$00.75
- Harrington, S., Joseph, S., Linley, P., Wood, A. (2006). Positive psychology: Past, present, and (possible) future. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(1), doi: 10.1080/17439760500372796
- Gilman, R., Huebner, E. (2003). Toward a Focus on Positive Psychology in School Psychology. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2)
- Gilman, R., Huebner, E. (2003). A Review of Life Satisfaction Research with Children and Adolescents. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2)
- Joseph, S., Linley, P. (2006). Positive Psychology Versus the Medical Model. *American Psychologist*, doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.60.4.332
- Kitayama, S., & Markus, H. (1991). Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), doi: 0033-295X/91/\$3.00
- Lane, K., Robertson, E., Rogers, L., Wehby, J. (2007). How Do Different Types of High School Students Respond to School wide Positive Behavior Support Programs? *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 15(1)
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2000). On Studying Positive Emotions. *American Psychological Association*, 3(5)

- Manby, M., Parton, C. (2009). The contribution of group work programmes to early intervention and improving children's emotional well-being. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 27(1), doi: 10.1080/02643940902731823
- Marsh, H. (2002). Causal Ordering of Academic Self-Concept and Achievements. *Self-Concept Research: Driving International Research Agendas*, 1.
- Morris, V., Taylor, S., Wilson, J. (2000). Using Children's Stories to Promote Peace in Classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 28(1)
- Pelham, B, & Swann, W. (1989). From Self-Conceptions to Self-Worth: On The Sources and Structure of Global Self-Esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(4), doi: 0022-3514/89
- Simplicio, J. (1999). A More Innovative Classroom Can be as Easy as One, Two, Three. *Education*, 120(1).
- Strumpfer, D. (2005). Standing on the shoulders of giants: Notes on early positive psychology (Psychofortology). *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35(1)
- Turner, R. (1976). The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 81(5), Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org>
- Wiggins, J., Wiggins, M. (2010). Elementary students' self-esteem and behavioral ratings related to counselor time-task emphases. *School Counselor*, 39(5)
- Zimmerman, B. (1990). Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview. *Educational Psychologist*, 25(1)

## **Appendix A**

### **Letter of Parental Consent**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Roberta Dihoff and Dr. John Klanderman as part of my master's thesis concerning how to increase self-esteem in children. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. The goal of the study is to determine how positive psychology techniques can be applied in a classroom setting to improve peer relationships and self-esteem in students.

This study will take place on three consecutive Fridays and will examine Increasing students' self-esteem through the implementation of the Bucket Filler Lesson Plans. These lessons have been implemented throughout the United States for students of many different grade levels. I believe these lessons will be beneficial to my research and could also have implications for future second grade curriculum in terms of positive behavior supports. To preserve each child's confidentiality a number system will be used to identify individuals.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. At the conclusion of the study a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 609-304-1292 or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Roberta Dihoff at (856) 256-4500 ext.3783. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jenna Norton

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by Dec. 10th.

I grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

I do not grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

(Parent/Guardian signature)

\_\_\_\_\_

(Date)