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A Study of the Relationship Between a Character Education Program and Self-Esteem

Nina Musante

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CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

AND SELF-ESTEEM

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CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

AND SELF-ESTEEM

NINA MUSANTE

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DEDICATION

To my parents, John and Carol Musante

Because of their love, support and encouragement throughout my life, it has given me the desire and courage to stay strong and tackle the many obstacles I have encountered. Without them I would not have accomplished the many achievements in my life.

With all my love, your daughter.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Theodore Roosevelt once stated that "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society" (STARS, 1995, pg. 2). Our society is slowly falling into deep moral decay due to the breakdown of the family along with a rapid deterioration of societal values. As a result of the moral decay within our society, the children that are educated to lead our nation enter the doors of their neighborhood schools with their self-esteem squelched. Teaching moral character is as old as education and throughout history education had two great goals, to be smart and to become good. Our nation was founded by men who were educated not only in academics, but in upholding the morals and values of every man. By the start of the 20th century, the consensus supporting character education began to crumble under the blows of several powerful forces. The qualities today that should allow us to see good in ourselves and in others has fallen into deep moral decay. The National Research Council summed up in a 1992 report that the United States, one of the richest countries in the world, has become one of the most violent of all industrialized nations (Hewlett, 1991). With the breakdown of families,

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a lack of civility in everyday life, greediness at a time when one in five

children are poor, sexual promiscuity, violence and sex on television and

movies, and the betrayal of our children through sexual, physical, verbal

and emotional abuse are just some of the factors that have left parents and

educators scrambling to find an answer (Lickona, 1993).

Character Education maintains that once a comprehensive concept

of character is determined, then a comprehensive approach can be

developed to impart that character through education. With this approach,

schools can look at themselves through a moral lens and consider how

virtually everything that goes on in the school affects the values and

character of students. The phases of character development will then

become a tool that can be used in the classroom and in the student's school

career (Stirling, Archibald, McKay, & Berg, 1998).

Statement of Purpose

The question of whether virtue should be taught in schools will be

examined through a comprehensive review of the literature. The purpose

of this study is to explore the relationship that character education

programs have on students' self-esteem.

Statement of the Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in composite or subscale self-esteem as a result of the character education intervention program, as indicated by the pre and post-test measurements on the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1989). Each student thus served as his or her own control on the SEI. The parametric paired t test was utilized for data that was normally distributed. The non-parametric Sign Test was used for data that was not normally distributed. All analyses were performed as a 2-tailed test at a p value < 0.05.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Defining Character Education

For the purpose of this thesis, character education is defined as a lifelong developmental process by which children learn about and apply ethical, or shared values to their lives (Kohlberg, 1984). Such ethical values might be defined as a standard or principle in which people judge the rightness or goodness of an individual's aim or action (Shaver & Strong, 1982). London (1987) emphasized that even though a universal definition cannot be given, it is more important to identify attributes that are associated with good character. The focus of character education is to learn about character traits such as respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, fairness, and citizenship and then teach students to apply these traits to everyday life. It is learning respect for oneself and for others. It is learning good decision making skills and being in control of one's own actions. Most important, it is a long-term process in helping young people develop good character, doing the right thing, caring for others, and treating others as one would want to be treated (Pearson & Nicholson,

2000). The values taught in character education affirm human dignity and promote the good and human rights of all (Stirling, et al, 1998).

Although these character traits might serve as a guideline for character education programs, what evolves from this and other lists are three interrelated areas that seem to identify good character. These three areas focus on how individuals relate to self, to others, and to the community at large. A focus on "self" could include such personal traits as responsibility, self-discipline, courage, and self-respect. A focus on "others" emphasizes students' relationships with classmates, friends, and significant others. In addition, traits such as honesty, respect, kindness, and empathy are also equally important to the student's character development. The traits fairness, justice, and civic virtue apply to a larger community, particularly the whole school (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). If students are to develop healthy lifelong character traits, then a comprehensive set of measurable goals must be developed, including strategies to accomplish positive moral behavior in the school setting as well as the community as a whole (Lickona, 1993).

History of Character Education

Character education is not one of the newest curricula to be introduced to schools. Character has actually been an ongoing argument with the debatable question of whether virtue should be taught in schools and if so, how should it be taught. Western thinkers have pondered this question for nearly 2,500 years. Philosophers as well as educators have struggled with how to nurture moral or character development in young people. Plato and Aristotle highlighted in the early Greek literature questions of virtue. A line could easily be traced from Homer's writings in 750 to Solon who wrote in the 600's to the Greek tragedies and comic playwrights of fifth-century Athens, which showed that much of their poetry related to moral education. For a variety of reasons, the middle and latter parts of the fifth-century began to question whose responsibility it was to teach virtue (Roochnik, 1997).

Academic subjects like history, mathematics, and language arts have a common definition, but no agreeable definition seems to be available for character education. For example, Vessels and Boyd (1996) defined character education as "strategic instruction that promotes social and personal responsibility and the development of good character traits

and moral virtues" (Vessels & Boyd, p.55). Kaplan (1995), believed it is important to teach students to make good decisions on their own rather than telling them what to do. For Lickona (1993), character education was conceived to encompass the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. Schools must help children understand the primary values, adapt or commit to them and then act upon them in their own lives (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). The very first laws to deal with public education occurred in the mid 1600's. These laws made the development of character a central focus of education (Gathercoal & Crowell, 2000). The idea to produce more godly individuals grew out of a threefold framework: 1. the Holy Bible, upon which education was originally established in the colonies, 2. the deistic and theistic religious beliefs of the colonists, and 3. the importance of the teachings of philosopher John Locke (Huffman, 1993). Locke (Elias, 1989) had emphasized that educational goals include virtue, wisdom, and learning. The teachings from this framework were apparent in the lessons of colonial texts, such as, Pilgrim's Progress, and Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac. These texts impacted the lives of people in colonial times and

their influence continues to impact people today. From the earliest days of the United States history, schools used the Bible, maxims, and proverbs, to encourage students to live exemplary lives. The most prominent textbook of the 19th century was the McGuffey Reader which was filled with biblical tales, poems, and stories of moral lessons. In 1918, while reorganizing the secondary education program, the National Education Association's Commission identified "ethical character" and "citizenship" as "cardinal principles" of education (Ries, 1999).

Character education remained relatively unchanged in the schools until the 1930's. With the concerns over freedom of religion and speech, a reemphasis on the teaching of morals and personal values in public schools began to impact the nation and the education system (Montgomery & Plevyak, 2000). School prayer was struck down in 1962 by the United States Supreme Court, thus causing schools to question whether values should be taught in the classroom. However, by the 1970's a "value's clarification" movement had begun encouraging students to examine their own values and discouraging teachers from evaluating or judging the beliefs and decisions made by students (Ries, 1999). By the 1980's, with crime and drug use on the rise and the nation's schools receiving failing

grades in studies of academic achievement, many felt the pendulum had swung too far. It was during this time that a renewed effort to spotlight values at school began to take root throughout the nation. As a result of the Character Education movement, the Character Education Partnership (CEP) was born. The CEP sought to defuse politically loaded questions like "whose values?" by rallying schools behind what was called core ethical values such as respect, responsibility and honesty. The goal was to make this a model for students as well as an agreeable solution for all (Ries, 1999).

Character Education vs. Academics

Due to the escalation of concerns, public opinion demanded that schools reassert their traditional role by providing moral education for children (Ryan, 1986; Vessels & Boyd, 1996). Although there were no agreements or set guidelines on what should be taught, public opinion demanded that something be taught (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). In 1996, a nationwide survey conducted by the National School Boards Association found some form of character education being offered in 45 percent of 399 responding districts. Twenty-one states have received grants for up to one million dollars since 1995 under the United States

Department of Education's Partnership in the Character Education Pilot

Project Programs. At least fourteen states have encouraged or required an

emphasis on character education since 1994, according to the Education

Commission. One such school district in Alabama, goes so far as to

mandate at least ten minutes of character education each day in all grade

levels (Ries, 1999).

Today students have few socially acceptable values and morals,

they lack even the simplest social skills, and many students come from

homes with few models of what it means to live in a civil society

(Gathercoal & Crowell, 2000). Pinning down character education must

include schools, families, communities, and religious institutions. Today,

character education is defined and categorized as a widely moral

education, education of the virtues, character training, and civic education

(Zara, 2000). Most elementary schools offer various types of lessons in

character education. In middle and high schools, programs are less

common, and most are often integrated into health or sex education

classes or violence prevention courses where the focus on character is

minimal (Portner, 1998).

Havighurst (1953), identified that children in early childhood learn to identify between right and wrong. In middle childhood, they learn to get along with their peers and develop a conscience as well as attitudes toward social groups and institutions (Havighurst, 1953). The heart and soul of the character education programs are simply role modeling various characters because good character needs to be taught from a "Do as I do" not a "Do as I say" perspective (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). Children need to be taught and observe from role models in establishing boundaries and learning how to make healthy choices.

The process of character education includes implementation and assessments. For character education to be effective it must be implemented across the school culture, in the classroom as well as outside the classroom to be contiguous to students' lives in the home and community. Character education advocates agree that pinning down a contemporary national character means agreeing to certain values first (Zara, 2000). Whatever the grade level, what character education means in real terms can vary greatly from school to school, but should be integrated into everything within the school (Ries, 1999).

Implications and Criticism of Character Education

Parents as well as educators want children to develop their talents and skills in all areas, to be smart, popular, athletic, and artistic. Attention to the various aspects of character development can enhance a child's self-esteem, but will these children who are considered good in school be viewed as different (Bempechat, 2000). Many children in the United States are living below the poverty line, and problems associated with poverty like drug use, unemployment, homelessness, and mental illness are just a few reflections of misbehavior and moral confusion in the character development of an individual. Even in the middle class families, a moral dilemma exists when one or both parents work long hours, thus leaving less time for active involvement in their child's education. Would society be improved if virtues, values, and moral reasoning were taught to students in school? If so, parents and educators would have to agree on a core set of basic beliefs that could be taught in the classroom and emphasized at home as well (Montgomery & Plevyak, 2000).

The implementation of character education has become a subject of criticism by many. Prominent education essayist Alfie Kohn (1997) created a firestorm of debate in the pages of the Phi Delta Kappa. Kohn

charged that the character education movement takes an unjustifiable view of a young person's nature and it is little more than "a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducement designed to make children work harder and do what they're told" (Kohn, 1997, p. 428). On the other hand, character education advocates maintain that character education emphasizes simple values in an environment that expresses concern and even the best programs will allow students to set the rules (Ries, 1999).

Character education is meant to engage students in school, by reinforcing positive values, bringing civility back to the classroom, and encouraging the community to get involved with school. But in some schools, character education is taught as a separate course that is often dry and ineffective because there is no follow up to the lesson or activity. At other schools, a commercial curriculum that may be a good first step into character education ends up being the only step taken. Even in states that require an emphasis on character education, the law in most cases won't say exactly how or what is to be taught, just that it must be taught, thus, leading to an uneven implementation (Ries, 1999). Many parents struggle to provide their children with the best education possible and although

they are familiar with societal obstacles at what price does academic excellence or character development pay (Bempechat, 2000).

A major criticism of the character education considered by the school reform movement is that of educators who are busy working to enhance the child's self-esteem and failing to address the issue of improving school academics. In particular, educators need to spend less time worrying about self-esteem and more on competence, setting higher expectations for children, challenging children to confront learning difficulty, and encouraging parents to take their child's education more seriously (Benpechat, 2000).

Increasing self-esteem has become the goal of many of the character education programs. Rather than throwing considerable knowledge behind programs that provide remediation (a dirty word in some education circles), society is embracing lower standards in academics to the social promotion of character education, thus graduating high school students that are functionally illiterate (Bempechat, 2000).

There is much debate on a return to basics in mathematics, phonics, and science. Traditional methods and classical content are making a comeback in schools across the nation. Some even believe that students

character and educational quality have been compromised as a result of decades of educational experiments (Zara, 2000). The persistent need and use of "the carrot on the stick" reward system to manage children in schools and in homes, often results in the lack of acquiring social responsibility and emotional competence. Children have become demanding in their expectation to be reinforced for their good deeds and refuse to comply when rewards are not provided. Parents and teachers consequently resort to punishment and eventually promote a circle of dependence and defiance. Social and emotional competencies are not fixed at birth; children must learn skills to help them develop character and live fulfilling lives, but if the skills are not taught early the more difficult it will be to teach and expect a child to comply later on (Goleman, 1995).

Troubling Trends in Youth Character

The escalation of crimes of violence in schools has made it imperative that teachers address the subject of values and ethics in the classroom. Educators, parents, and government all seem to be pointing the finger at the schools and making them responsible for producing morally responsible citizens. Because all citizens do not share the same

moral beliefs, this is a sensitive topic and must be approached with caution in today's society (Montgomery & Plevyak, 2000).

The problem with troubled youths today is a deep-seated lack of self-esteem. If children could appreciate what they have and feel better about themselves, they would be less likely to turn to violence or drugs, and more likely to do well in school (Portner, 1998). What was one time a unique opportunity for educators has become a responsibility to be influential in helping young people clarify self-concept and develop positive self-esteem (Hyman, 1998). With the societal and economic upheavals of the past three decades many educators and psychologists agree that if youngsters feel better about themselves, then the problems that threaten their development into healthy and productive citizens can be solved (Bempechat, 2000).

Increasing students self-esteem has become the primary goal of intervention programs. Anyone who works with children, whether those children live troubled lives or not, is working to build the child's self-esteem. The concern over a child's self-esteem has become a tremendous source of anxiety for many parents. At the same time, many parents in more affluent communities are expressing increased anger at attempts to

infuse their children's schools with a strict academic rigor for which poor parents clamor. Many advocate for a more relaxed academic atmosphere, in part because they are concerned that the academic pressure will undermine the children's sense of well-being and self-esteem. There has been no other time in history where a nation has been so consumed over ensuring that children feel good about themselves (Bempechat, 2000). But, there has also been no other time in the nation's history where the absence of strong self-esteem has been associated with several health and social problems experienced by American youth, including eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, depression and suicide, youth runaways, anger and violence (Hyman, 1998).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem became part of America's pop culture icon during the 1960's. At the time of the sexual revolution and a rampant use of illicit drugs, the generation of this time was seeking to understand who they were. It was during this time that self-esteem doctrines took root in the schools, self-help books crowded the bookstore shelves, and educational publishers flooded schools with a new curricula that dovetailed what society was demanding to understand (Portner, 1998). Because self-

esteem is the foundation of an individual's emotional well being and important in a variety of attitudes, behaviors, and achievements, it can be difficult if not impossible to find a professional in the education field who does not regard this as a primary characteristic in the development of children (Pope, McHale, & Craighead, 1988). Even though parents initially serve as a major influence on self-esteem in the young child's life, that influence later shifts to include other adults, mainly teachers (Juhasz, 1989). It is crucial that teachers who come into daily contact with students consider their potential to influence self-esteem (Mull, 1991). Before an individual can develop a sense of value that individual must have a clear view of themselves. Typically, individuals with high self-esteem have a clear self concept, and individuals with low self-esteem have a high level of uncertainty about one's self (Baumeister, 1993).

Self-esteem like character education will remain a controversial topic for years to come. Programs come and go so quickly that there is little research done on any one specific program used in schools, even studies on self-esteem in general cast doubt on their effectiveness, especially when it comes to reducing violence (Pope, et al, 1998).

Coopersmith (1967) identified self-esteem as a belief significantly associated with a sense of personal satisfaction and effective functioning. There are three major views that make studying self-esteem difficult. The first view is placing distinction on the quality and quantity of self-esteem. The qualitative issues of self-esteem reflect how an individual expresses esteem and whether it is genuine or not. The second view is that value is applied to an individual with a high or low self-esteem. These values are often used interchangeably with positive and negative labels. An individual that has high self-esteem may be considered accepting of himself by some or pompous and vainly prideful by others. Individuals with low self-esteem may be viewed as inferior by some and humble, modest, and less grandiose by others. The third view is that self-esteem is identified as a significant component of an individual's personality (Coopersmith, 1967).

Rosenberg defined self-esteem as an attitude of being either positive or negative. He believed that individuals directed that attitude at ones self. Rosenberg believed that this attitude was a "pivotal variable" in behavior (Rosenberg, 1965).

> High self-esteem, as reflected in our scale of items, expresses the feeling that one is 'good enough.' The individual simply feels that he is a person of worth; he respects himself for what he is, but does not stand in awe of himself nor expect others to stand in awe of him. He does not necessarily consider himself superior to others ... Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-rejection, self dissatisfaction, self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. The picture is disagreeable, and he wishes it were otherwise (1965, pg. 31).

In conclusion, Rosenberg believed that the presence or absence of self-esteem directed one toward positive or negative experiences in behavior (Mruk, 1995).

Adler believed that the sense of inferiority was the basis for all unhealthy life styles. He believed that by changing the opinion of ones self, then the individual could change. Adler's therapy focused on enhancing the clients self-esteem (Bottome, 1947). Bandura concluded that self-esteem was based on an individual's standard of merit if an individual fulfilled their standard of merit then the individual experienced self-satisfaction from a job well done, but was displeased when they failed to measure up to that standard of merit (Bandura, 1997).

Meeks, Heit, and Page (1996) contend that individuals with positive self-esteem are more likely to make responsible decisions and feel

confident they can deal with their problems, but those with a negative self-

esteem are more likely to engage in self destructive behavior. With fears

of unpleasant experiences and continuing feelings of sadness, frustration,

and anger, the child's self-esteem will become undermined (Meeks et al,

1996). However, it is the unpleasant experiences that give way to the

child's greatest growth and maturity. If children only experience success,

it is certain that they will fall apart at the first sign of failure (Bempechat,

2000).

The School's Role

The school community and environment are primarily the focus of

the school administrator. The relationship of students and how they work

with each other is the responsibility of teachers. School counselors serve

as a consultant to school personnel as well as focusing on helping children

develop character traits that will enhance their understanding of self and

their relationships with others in school as well as in the community

(Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). Hattie (1992) noted that an important aim

for counseling and the education programs is the enhancement of self

(Hattie, 1992).

When implementing self-esteem programs in schools, presenters should have a knowledge and understanding of self-esteem, presenters should be trained in cognitive techniques because these were found to have the most impact, programs should be short in duration, concentrated, appropriate, dependable , and outcome measures should be used to verify understanding (Burnett, 1998).

There seems to be no consistent answer as to whether self-esteem can be enhanced as a result of participation in various intervention activities. It has been noted that much of the work done in schools has not been effective because teachers do not have specific training in the area and programs are generally associated with the expectation of gains in achievement (Hattie, 1992).

While it is true that students who like themselves tend to perform better academically, there is no real evidence that self-esteem programs have any effect. Children's self-esteem can be elevated only if they gain recognition or achievement for particular tasks or aptitudes that students themselves believe are important (Portner, 1998). Self-esteem programs may be designed with good intentions, however if self-esteem is to evolve over time through experiences both positive and negative and goals are

easily attained on things that are normally considered difficult, then manipulating children's experiences to ensure happiness will not prepare them for experiences in failure. Parents though, are desperate to protect their children from challenges, setbacks, and failure so an immediate response of success is more important than looking at the long-term effects (Bempechat, 2000).

Silvestri, Dantonio and Eason (1994) investigated enhancing self-esteem by implementing a self-development program and a relaxation / imagery training. Students were pre-tested with the Perceived Competence Scale for Children. After the sixteen week treatment period, the pre-test instrument was administered as a post-test. In conclusion, the authors found that it is crucial to enhance self-esteem during the elementary years because it is at this time the ground work is laid for positive and negative feelings about competency and can affect future goals and aspirations (Silvestri, Dantonio & Eason, 1994). Harper and Marshall (1991) concluded from their research, involving the Mooney Problem Checklist and the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and the areas in a student's life including home, social, school and self. They concluded that few

adolescents will pass through those stages without experiencing some problems in those areas (Harper & Marshall, 1991).

In conclusion, the researcher of this study believes that a great disservice would be done if educators turned their back on teaching character. Teaching character education is the responsibility of everyone involved in raising the child. Although the research for this study focused on the effect that character education had on a child's self-esteem, character education has been designed to educate the child in mind and morals, which will allow children to become productive citizens in society.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Participants

The subjects that participated in this study consisted of a total of fifty-five sixth grade students. The students ranged in age from eleven to thirteen years old. A permission slip (See Appendix A) was sent home to the parents for parental permission to participate in the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) pre-test and post-test (Coopersmith, 1989). Permission slips indicated that the test was optional and of the fifty-five sent home, all were returned with permission to participate. The first SEI was given to students on September 11, 2000. A twelve week intervention of character education activities was implemented by the researcher who was also the school counselor. The counselor chose activities from the Students Taking a Right Stand - Kids with Character or STARS Program (STARS, 1995). At the end of the twelve week intervention activities, students were post-tested on December 18, 2000 with the same SEI Test.

Demographics

The population of students that participated in this research came from varying backgrounds consisting of students from economically disadvantaged homes.

Instrument

The Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1989) is an instrument designed to measure an individuals' attitudes and experiences in social, academic, family, and personal areas of their life. The SEI's relationship to the term self-esteem is the evaluation in which an individual believes in their ability to be competent, successful, significant, and worthy. Overall, self-esteem is a personal judgement that one would make in the attitudes that one holds for oneself. The SEI comes in three forms which include the School form, School Short form, and the Adult form. The SEI school form was the instrument chosen for this research study (Appendix B). The SEI is designed for students between the ages of eight and fifteen years old and can be administered individually or in a group and can be used with males and females. The SEI can also be administered to any ethnic group or special population, including learning disabled and EMR students. The SEI School form consists of fifty-eight

items; fifty self-esteem items and eight items that constitute the Lie scale. The Lie scale measures a student's defensiveness or test wiseness. The self-esteem items yield a total score and, if desired, separate scores for four sub-scales: General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, and School-Academic. General Self looks at an individual perception of themselves, Social Self-Peer focus on how an individual perceives what others think of them, Home-Parents relates to an individuals perception of them in their home environment, and School-Academic looks at how an individual perceives their ability to work in a school setting. The sub-scales allow for variances in perceptions of self-esteem in different areas of experience with a general assessment of high, medium, or low self-esteem. Cutoff points can be established and any persons with scores above or below these points can be identified for further evaluation. The purpose of using this particular test was based on the effectiveness that it had on program evaluation. The SEI can be used as a pre and post test to help judge the effectiveness of a program that identifies self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1989).

Based on the test - retest reliability coefficient obtained for the school form of the SEI , Coopersmith (1967) found that after a five week

interval with a sample of thirty grade five students was .88. The reliability after a three year interval with a different sample of fifty-six grade five students was .70. The Self-Esteem Inventory has no exact criteria for high, medium, and low levels of self-esteem though a general assessment can be identified. In most studies, the distribution of SEI scores have been skewed in the direction of high self-esteem. The means have a range from 70 to 80 with a standard deviation from 11 to 13. Scores have been shown to increase slightly from grade level to grade level (Coopersmith, 1989).

Procedure

To administer the SEI students were tested in their classrooms within a forty-five minute period. The students were given two test booklets and a number was assigned to each student. Students placed the same number on each booklet and the test administrator collected one of the booklets so that it could be used for the post-test at the end of the twelve week period. The test administrator explained the research the students would be involved in for the next twelve weeks and then read the instructions for the SEI test. The students were asked to use a pencil and were allowed to begin working individually. The test administrator walked around the room and was available to answer any questions.

The climate in the room was cool and comfortable, lighting was good and the door was closed to the classroom to eliminate any outside distractions. The test was administered in the afternoon of September 11, 2000 to three different sixth grade classrooms following the same procedure for each classroom. The next twelve weeks were followed up with self-esteem activities from the Students Taking a Right Stand: Kids with Character, STARS Program (STARS, 1995).

On December 18, 2000, each student received their number assigned post-test form and instructions were read again to students prior to taking the test. The climate in each of the classrooms was similar to the climate when the pre-test was administered in September.

Data Analysis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in the composite or subscale self-esteem as a result of the intervention program, as indicated by the pre and post-test measurement on the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1989). Each student thus served as his or her own control on the SEI.

Chapter Four

Results

The paired t test is a parametric test based on normal distribution of the   data. Most findings indicated non-significant differences between pre and post-test measurements (Table 1). A significant decline in the Social Self-Peers subscale score was found.

TABLE 1
Pre and Post-test SEI Components: Parametric Tests

Component		Pretest	Posttest	Difference Posttest - Pretest	P value
General Self Subscale Score	n	55	55	-0.87	0.37
	mean±sd	8.8±5.3	7.9±5.8		
	median	9	6		
	min, max	0, 20	0, 23		
Social Self-Peers Subscale Score	n	55	55	-0.78	0.05
	mean±sd	2.4±2.1	1.6±2.0		
	median	2	1		
	min, max	0, 7	0, 8		
Home-Parents Subscale Score	n	55	55	-0.53	0.20
	mean±sd	2.6±2.1	2.1±2.2		
	median	2	1		
	min, max	0, 8	0, 8		
School-Academic Subscale Score	n	55	55	+0.24	0.49
	mean±sd	2.1±1.9	2.4±2.1		
	median	2	2		
	min, max	0, 7	0, 7		
Total Self Score	n	55	55	-3.89	0.27
	mean±sd	31.9±19.8	28.0±21.5		
	median	36	20		
	min, max	0, 82	2, 86		
Lie Scale Score	n	55	55	-0.02	0.96
	mean±sd	5.0±1.8	5.0±2.1		
	median	5	5		
	min, max	1, 8	1, 8		

P values are reported for 2-tailed comparison of Post-test SEI component versus Pretest SEI component using paired t test.

The paired t test is based on the assumption that the data is normally distributed. When the data is not normally distributed, a non-parametric test is appropriate. Table 2 is the test of normality for the SEI components. A p value < 0.05 indicates a significant departure from normality. The General Self sub-scale pretest score was normally distributed. All other SEI components should utilize a non-parametric statistical test.

TABLE 2

Pre and Post-test SEI Components: Tests of Normality

Component		n	Degrees of Freedom	Statistic	P Value
General Self Subscale Score	Pretest	55	55	0.100	0.20
	Posttest	55	55	0.156	<0.01
Social Self-Peers Subscale Score	Pretest	55	55	0.224	<0.001
	Posttest	55	55	0.222	<0.001
Home-Parents Subscale Score	Pretest	55	55	0.166	<0.001
	Posttest	55	55	0.214	<0.001
School-Academic Subscale Score	Pretest	55	55	0.213	<0.001
	Posttest	55	55	0.215	<0.001
Total Self Score	Pretest	55	55	0.128	<0.05
	Posttest	55	55	0.156	<0.01
Lie Scale Score	Pretest	55	55	0.180	<0.001
	Posttest	55	55	0.156	<0.01

P values are reported for Kolmogorov-Smirnoff Test; $p < 0.05$ indicates a significant departure from normality.

The Sign Test was used to examine the direction of the data where, under the null hypothesis, if the intervention had no effect on self-esteem, an equal number of students would be expected to have positive and negative differences between the pre and post test. The General Self, Social Self-Peers, and the Home-Parents subscale scores all showed a decline in self-esteem (Table 3). Only the Social Self-Peers changed, however, and was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). A non-significant enhancement in School-Academic subscale score was found (p=0.43).

TABLE 3
Pre and Post-test SEI Components: Non-parametric Tests

Component	Difference Posttest - Pretest	n	Statistic	P value
General Self Subscale Score	Positive Differences	21	-1.50	0.13
	Negative Differences	33		
	Ties	1		
	Total	55		
Social Self-Peers Subscale Score	Positive Differences	15	-1.96	0.05
	Negative Differences	29		
	Ties	11		
	Total	55		
Home-Parents Subscale Score	Positive Differences	18	-1.06	0.29
	Negative Differences	26		
	Ties	11		
	Total	55		
School-Academic Subscale Score	Positive Differences	23	+0.79	0.43
	Negative Differences	17		
	Ties	15		
	Total	55		
Total Self Score	Positive Differences	22	-1.23	0.22
	Negative Differences	32		
	Ties	1		
	Total	55		
Lie Scale Score	Positive Differences	24	-0.45	0.65
	Negative Differences	20		
	Ties	11		
	Total	55		

P values are reported for 2-tailed comparison of Posttest SEI component versus Pretest SEI component using Sign Test.

Summary of Results

Based on the pre and post-test measurement of the SEI, no significant differences were found for composite and most self-esteem subscales. A significant decline in Social Self-Peers Subscale was noted by the parametric paired t test (Table 1) and confirmed by the more appropriate non parametric Sign Test (Table 3). The distribution of actual scores for the pre and post-test Social Self-Peers Subscale is given in Table 2. A decline in virtually all categories of scores was noted, with a doubling of the scores in the lowest category.

Based on a p value of 0.05, the character program that was implemented during the intervention period did not enhance most components of students' self-esteem, nor did the program hurt most components of students' self-esteem. The students' defensiveness or test wiseness, as depicted by the Lie Scale, did not identify significant changes from the pre-test to the post-test (Appendix C and D). The distribution of actual scores for pre and post-test measurement for each subscale and total self-esteem is given in Appendix E and F. Though a separate control group was not identified, each student served as their own individual control member by virtue of the pre and post-test design.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Discussion

The null hypothesis of this study stated that there will be no significant difference in the composite or subscale self-esteem as a result of the intervention program as indicated by the pre and post-test measurements on the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1989). The premise of this thesis was to determine how character Education Programs would affect student's self-esteem. The findings indicated no significant differences for the overall composites and most of the self-esteem subscales. The researcher did find a significant decline in the Social Self-Peers subscale, thus showing that students do worry about what others think about them.

Limitations

The researcher identified four concerns that may have created limitations in the research identified in this study. One limitation theorized was the length of time of this study. Can changes in the self-esteem of an individual occur over a twelve-week period or would a different finding result if the pre-test were given at the start of school and interventions implemented throughout the school year followed by a post-

test at the end of the school year. The researcher theorized that one possibility for the decline in the Social-Self Peers subscale may be a result of students hoping for popularity and success and when the post-test was administered, these standards of merit had not been achieved.

The second limitation identified was the time of year that the post-test was implemented, just before the school's Christmas break. Holidays tend to be a difficult time of year for people. The researcher wondered if the results can be considered truly valid when the holiday season brings a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The third limitation of concern was the financial status of the students. The researcher was limited to students living in a lower financial status and questioned whether results would vary if the students came from varying backgrounds. The fourth limitation noted by the researcher dealt with a bias in that the counselor was also the researcher.

Recommendations

As noted in this study, educators must be trained in implementing character building skills. Family, educators and the community as a whole must work together. Although this was a short term research focusing on self-esteem, further research is needed on self-esteem, as well as other various character attributes. Also, long term research on the effects of

character education programs have on individuals may produce some workable results in better understanding the effectiveness of the character education programs and the development of the individuals character.

Conclusion

Character is a varied and complex subject. Self-esteem is just one component of an individuals character and based on the information found in this study, self-esteem is a very complex and controversial subject. Although there are few direct studies on self-esteem, clinicians and social psychologists do agree that self-esteem is an effective contributing determinant in an individuals personality. The mission of character education is to weave character building skills throughout the school day, integrating it into the school curriculum as well as the discipline policies, thus teaching children how to be productive citizens in society.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

FOX C-6 School District
745 Jeffco Blvd.
Arnold, MO 63010

August 21, 2000

Dear Parents,

As the new counselor of your child's school I am looking forward to an exciting year as I prepare your child to transition to the Junior High. Currently I am a graduate student at Lindenwood University and am in the process of completing my graduate work and obtain my Master of Arts degree in Elementary Counseling.

As part of my requirement I must conduct a research study and I have chosen to explore the relationship that our character education program has on our students self-esteem. I will be administering the Self-Esteem Inventory as a pre-test then I will implement a 12 week intervention of character education activities. At the end of 12 weeks I will post-test your child with the same Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1989). Your child's identity will remain completely confidential and their scores will be calculated in with all of the other participants. Following the completion of my study, the results will be on file in the Lindenwood University Library.

Your child's participation in this study is optional. If you wish to allow your child to participate, please sign the permission slip below and return it to your child's classroom teacher. I can assure you that the choice to allow your child to participate or not will remain completely confidential. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Nina Musante
Counselor
_____

_____ Yes my child may participate in the Self-Esteem Inventory pre/post-test.

_____ No my child may not participate in the Self-Esteem Inventory pre/post-test.

_____	_____	_____
(Child's Name)	(Parent Signature)	(Date)

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL FORM   SEI

Coopersmith Inventory

Stanley Coopersmith, Ph.D.
University of California at Davis

Please Print

Name _____ Age _____

School _____ Sex: M __ F __

Grade _____ Date _____

Directions

On the next pages, you will find a list of statements about feelings. If a statement describes how you usually feel, put an X in the column "Like Me." If the statement does not describe how you usually feel, put an X in the column "Unlike Me." There are no right or wrong answers.

43

Like Me	Unlike Me	
☐	☐	1. Things usually don't bother me.
☐	☐	2. I find it very hard to talk in front of the class.
☐	☐	3. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.
☐	☐	4. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.
☐	☐	5. I'm a lot of fun to be with.
☐	☐	6. I get upset easily at home.
☐	☐	7. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.
☐	☐	8. I'm popular with kids my own age.
☐	☐	9. My parents usually consider my feelings.
☐	☐	10. I give in very easily.
☐	☐	11. My parents expect too much of me.
☐	☐	12. It's pretty tough to be me.
☐	☐	13. Things are all mixed up in my life.
☐	☐	14. Kids usually follow my ideas.
☐	☐	15. I have a low opinion of myself.
☐	☐	16. There are many times when I'd like to leave home.
☐	☐	17. I often feel upset in school.
☐	☐	18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.
☐	☐	19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.
☐	☐	20. My parents understand me.
☐	☐	21. Most people are better liked than I am.
☐	☐	22. I usually feel as if my parents are pushing me.
☐	☐	23. I often get discouraged at school.
☐	☐	24. I often wish I were someone else.
☐	☐	25. I can't be depended on.
☐	☐	26. I never worry about anything.
☐	☐	27. I'm pretty sure of myself.
☐	☐	28. I'm easy to like.
☐	☐	29. My parents and I have a lot of fun together.

Short ☐

Like Me	Unlike Me	
☐	☐	30. I spend a lot of time daydreaming.
☐	☐	31. I wish I were younger.
☐	☐	32. I always do the right thing.
☐	☐	33. I'm proud of my school work.
☐	☐	34. Someone always has to tell me what to do.
☐	☐	35. I'm often sorry for the things I do.
☐	☐	36. I'm never happy.
☐	☐	37. I'm doing the best work that I can.
☐	☐	38. I can usually take care of myself.
☐	☐	39. I'm pretty happy.
☐	☐	40. I would rather play with children younger than I am.
☐	☐	41. I like everyone I know.
☐	☐	42. I like to be called on in class.
☐	☐	43. I understand myself.
☐	☐	44. No one pays much attention to me at home.
☐	☐	45. I never get scolded.
☐	☐	46. I'm not doing as well in school as I'd like to.
☐	☐	47. I can make up my mind and stick to it.
☐	☐	48. I really don't like being a boy. / girl.
☐	☐	49. I don't like to be with other people.
☐	☐	50. I'm never shy.
☐	☐	51. I often feel ashamed of myself.
☐	☐	52. Kids pick on me very often.
☐	☐	53. I always tell the truth.
☐	☐	54. My teachers make me feel I'm not good enough.
☐	☐	55. I don't care what happens to me.
☐	☐	56. I'm a failure.
☐	☐	57. I get upset easily when I'm scolded.
☐	☐	58. I always know what to say to people.

Gen	Soc	H	Sch	Total	L
☐	☐	☐	☐	$x2 =$	☐

To find the SOC score, place this stencil on the test sheet so that the item numbers on the stencil line up with the item numbers on the test sheet.

Count the number of times the student's marks correspond with the marked boxes on the stencil. Enter the total on the test sheet in the box labeled SOC.

Coopersmith Inventory — SCHOOL FORM
General Self (GEN) Scoring Key

Like Me Unlike Me

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29.

To find the GEN score, place this stencil on the test sheet so that the item numbers on the stencil line up with the item numbers on the test sheet.

Count the number of times the student's marks correspond with the marked boxes on the stencil. Enter the total on the test sheet in the box labeled GEN.

Like Me Unlike Me

30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58.

Like Me
Unlike Me

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29.

To find the H score, place this stencil on the test sheet so that the item numbers on the stencil line up with the item numbers on the test sheet.

Count the number of times the student's marks correspond with the marked boxes on the stencil. Enter the total on the test sheet in the box labeled H.
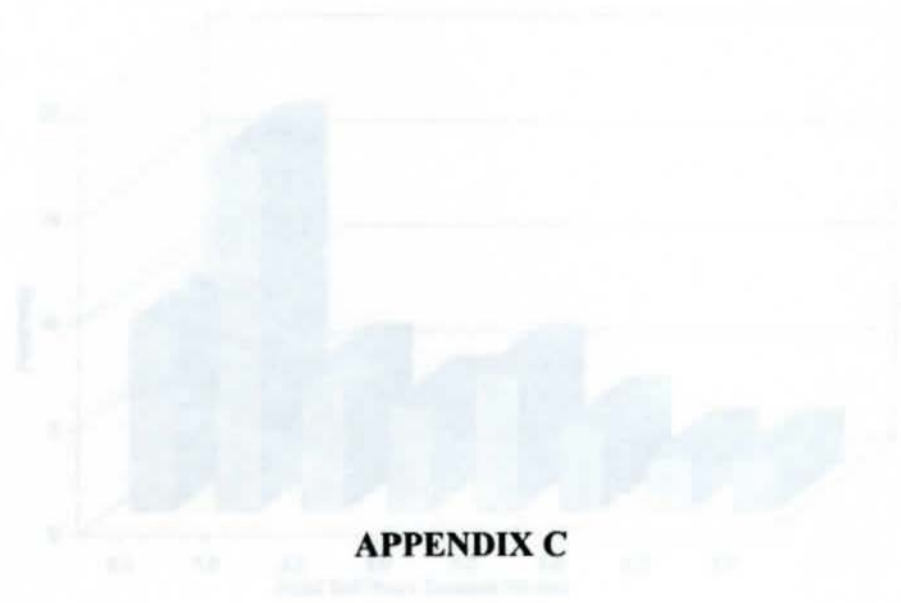
Like Me
Unlike Me

30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58.

Like Me

Unlike Me

To find the SCH score, place this stencil on the test sheet so that the item numbers on the stencil line up with the item numbers on the test sheet.

Count the number of times the student's marks correspond with the marked boxes on the stencil. Enter the total on the test sheet in the box labeled SCH.

Like Me

Unlike Me

Like Me Me

Unlike Me

To find the L score, place this stencil on the test sheet so that the item numbers on the stencil line up with the item numbers on the test sheet.

Count the number of times the student's marks correspond with the marked boxes on the stencil. Enter the total on the test sheet in the box labeled L.

Like Me Me

Unlike Me

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Social Self-Peers Subscale Pre-test
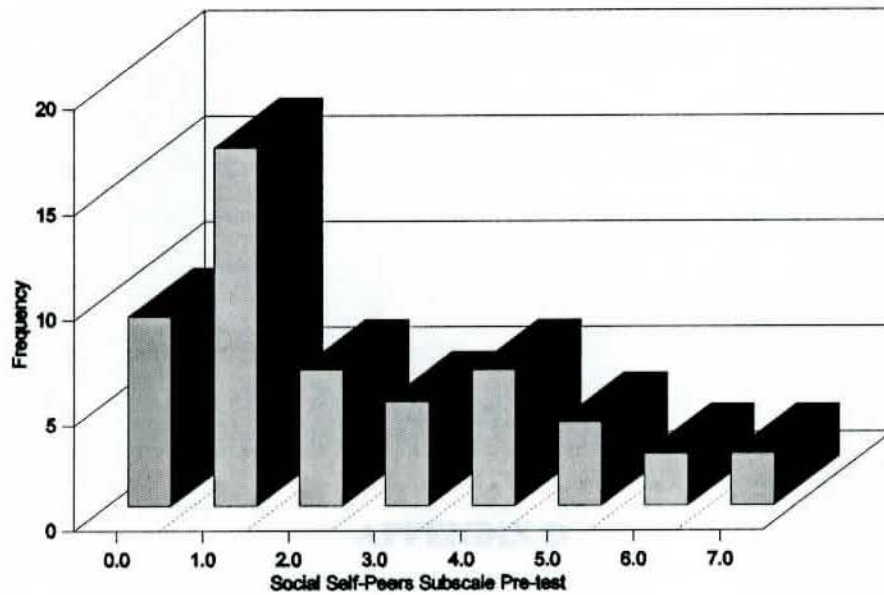
Mean = 2.4
Std. Dev. = 2.1
N = 55

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Social Self-Peers Subscale Post-test
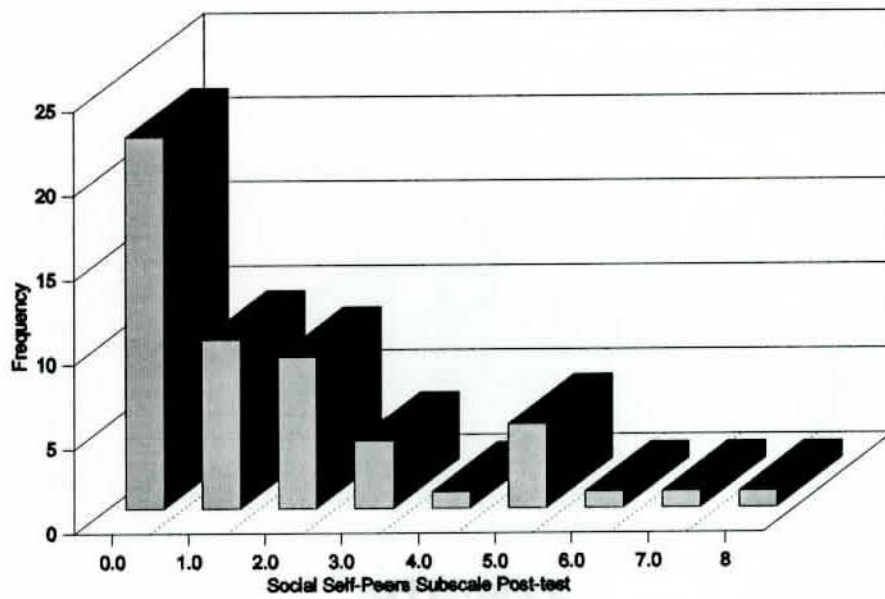
Mean = 16
Std. Dev. = 2.0
N = 55

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

Lie Scale Pre-test
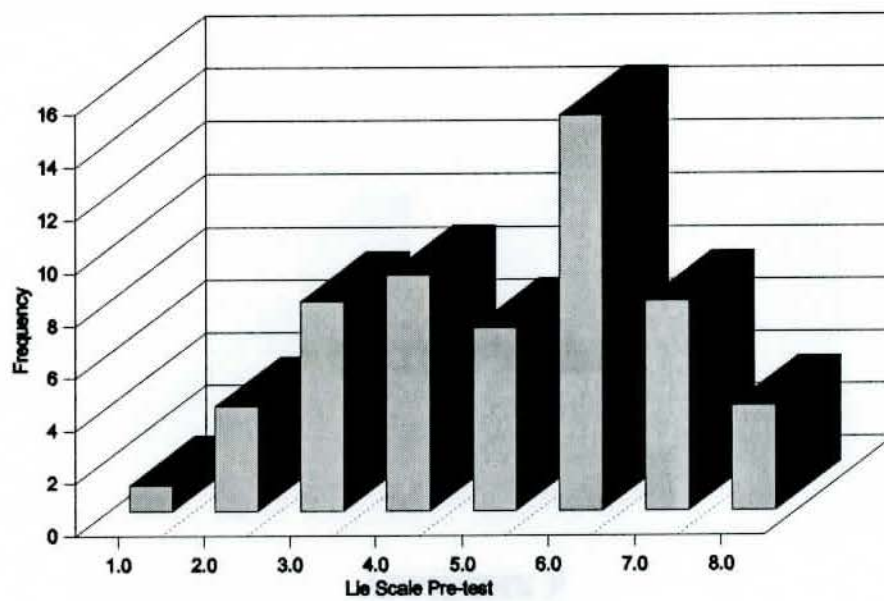
Mean = 5.0
Std. Dev. = 1.8
N = 55

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F

Lie Scale Post-test
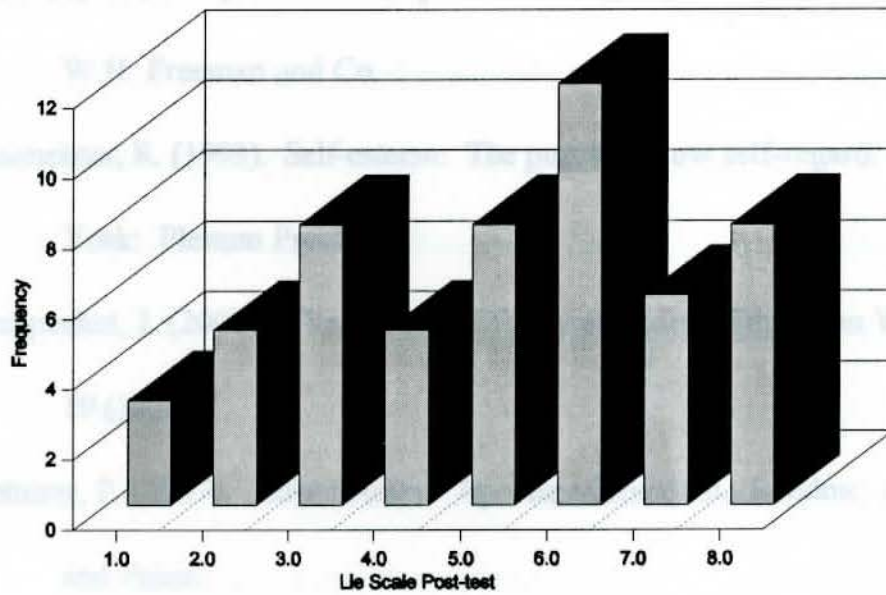
| Mean = 5.0 |
| Std. Dev. = 2.1 |
| N = 55 |

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