

THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION ON SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS
TAKING A LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS

by

Donna Payne Smith

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Implementing programs in social skills development will affect academic achievement among children who are Grade 7 students. A quantitative study was conducted using a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest, nonequivalent control-group design to determine if direct instruction in social skills has an impact upon academic achievement and social skills development. Participants were 128 students drawn from six intact classes of seventh grade students from a rural middle school in West Georgia. Participants completed a pretest and posttests, the Social Skills Improvement System- Rating Scale. During the treatment period, the treatment group received social skills instruction through stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*. The control group did not receive any social skills instruction. Data from both pretests and posttests were analyzed statistically using ANCOVA methods. Along with recommendations for further research are the results and interpretations.

Keywords: social skills, reading achievement, quasi-experimental study, ANCOVA

Dedication

First and foremost, this undertaking, research, and dissertation publication would have not have been possible without the deep love and understanding of the value and importance of education that was shared by my Granny Glenloch, Thomas Jewel Blackwelder Milam. Education was of utmost importance to her. After being made to quit school to work on the farm at age 16, she reared 10 children, catered to a loving husband, J. Otha , for 54 years then she returned for her high school diploma at the age of 74. She was the smartest woman I have ever met. This was her dream, for me. I love you, Granny, thank you. I miss you terribly.

My Mama, Nancy Milam Payne McKenzie, was also an inspiration to whom this work is dedicated. Mama worked full time, and went to school as often as she could to provide a role model to her children. She valued education, and insisted that her children educate themselves to become the best people that they could be. Thank you for providing me with a solid foundation on which to plant my feet and grow. I love you my Mama, and I miss you too!

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This dissertation would be lacking without the acknowledgement of those who helped, encouraged, and sacrificed to help me achieve this goal. From the bottom of my heart I give the sincerest thanks, appreciation and acknowledgement goes to those who deserve it most.

First, I would like to thank my God and Savior for giving me the ability to accomplish this task. Without His guidance and my faith, this momentous task would not have been accomplished. I am thankful. I know that through Him, I can share his love for others.

My husband, Chris, my boys, Mitchell, Mackayne, and Mckorey gave me the reason for this endeavor. May you someday benefit from the results of my dedication to the development of social skills and social skills interventions. I am here today only because of the strength of each of you. My mother-in-law, Judy, has been a constant push toward reaching this achievement.

To my little sister, Paula Gayle, I am THROUGH! Now it is your turn! I am so thankful for you listening to me ramble on and on about something that you did not know or care about just because you cared for me. I love you!

I also owe appreciation to my teachers, mentors, pastors, and friends. Without your confidence in me, and frequent words of encouragement, I would have been lost. You are all awesome, and I am blessed to know you! I am thankful for you and hope to someday return the favor.

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List of Abbreviations

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Reading Inventory (RI)

Short Grit Scale (Grit-S)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scale (SSIS-RS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One provides an overview, discusses the effect of Social Skills lessons on seventh grade students, and the rationale for teaching social skills through literature. The chapter delves into the background reasoning for teaching social skills. It addresses the problem statement, “Some children have poor social skills,” and explains that the purpose for conducting the study is to determine if there are positive effects of social skills instruction upon the behavior and academics of grade seven students.

Background

Adolescence is a time of growing and learning in which individuals transition from childhood to adulthood. This study seeks to assist adolescents, between 10 to 24 years old, through a time of turbulence. Adolescence is a period of time in which children experience a multitude of turmoil and strife on a daily basis. During this period, individuals are exposed to complexities and stress brought by physical, emotional, and physiological changes (Cowan, 2007). Thus, individuals also experience difficulty with their academic achievement (Needham, Crosnoe, & Muller, 2004). Often, individuals exhibit lagging skills needed to navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. These lagging skills may exhibit themselves as “difficulty with transitions, difficulty with challenging tasks, poor sense of time, reflecting on too many things at once, maintaining focus, changing routine, comprehension of spoken word, inability to express needs, and problem solving” (Greene, 2008, p. 10). A means of helping students cope with this period is to teach them social strategies. This study aimed to determine whether social strategies are beneficial to students across the board. It also attempted to indicate that teaching social skills helps to increase academic achievement.

In the current situation of required higher academic standards and accountability for everyone, many school systems have restricted the amount of social time that children can experience. Many middle schools have no recess or break time, which professionals consider a recharge and social competence building time (Cohen, 2007). In addition, lunchtime is limited to just enough time to eat food, with no socialization allowed; children may eat or socialize, not both. However, children need to be taught how to interact socially, especially those who lag behind others in developing social skills.

In particular, children with social skills deficits require implicit social skills instruction. Children that have reduced social skills have also difficulties in academic, emotional, and social development. For these children, social skills deficits can affect interactions with family, peers, and other adults (Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008). As schooling is about not just learning per se but also about developing social skills, society is affected when children emerge into the adult world without both academic and social skill sets fully developed (Rao et al., 2008).

The most effective method for addressing social skills deficits is to include all children in activities that require appropriate social interaction (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). These activities should be non-threatening and engaging for all children involved. If all children are able to interact appropriately, their academic achievement can maximize (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). Instructors combine social interaction with learning activities, for example, when children do homework using a buddy system. Instructors should begin social skills instruction by identifying social deficits to determine which particular skills have already been learned, because some do exist. The skills deficits are simply due to a lack of knowledge (Ruble et al., 2010).

The theories the researcher used as a framework for this study are Vygotsky's social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Bruner's constructivist learning theory (Bruner, 1960). The chosen study methodology is based on Vygotsky in that social skills instruction were the primary action in this study, and presumed to have a significant effect on both social skills and academic development. It is based on Bruner in that the group reading and discussion of the book will be an activity, one that builds on and adds to the students' existing social knowledge.

The rationale for choosing these two particular theoretical perspectives is as follows: Vygotsky (1978) stated that social development is a precursor to cognition; consciousness and cognition are the end product of social behavior. This relates to the proposed study in that Vygotsky (1978) stated that social development is the first step in cognitive development; the study's proposed methodology is to impart social skills training to a group on the children that lack social skills. Applying Vygotsky's theory, such training should have a positive impact on their social skills *and* cognitive development. Though Vygotsky's theory is the better part of a century old, researchers consider it valid and informs current research (Daniels, 2005). Social development theory posits that social interaction is critical for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Bruner (1960) stated that learning comes about as people compare new ideas and experiences in the context of what they already know. This constructivist learning theory postulates that people learn by comparing and integrating what they already know with new concepts (Bruner, 1967). The quasi-experimental design of this study will be guided by Bruner's (1967) concept: learning is contextual and the efficacy of learning is highly, if not totally dependent on the learner's existing knowledge and skill sets. Thus, the imparting of social skills is in itself a foundation for learning further skills (both social and academic). Constructivist

learning theory, while not embraced by all educators, has widespread acceptance in the field (Hein, 1991) and aligns with the approach of learn by doing.

The combined approach, therefore, is that social skills development leads to cognitive development, which in turn leads to further social skills development (Vygotsky, 1978); thus, the researcher gave the population direct instruction in social skills training improving their social skills and in turn, their cognitive development. The constructivist approach (Daniels, 2005) suggests that such development best takes place in the context of an activity, which will be group reading and discussion of *The Book of Virtues*.

The recent implementations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Common Core standards have shifted education's focus to academic achievement (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). Yet, researchers commonly accept that social skills development is as important as academic and intellectual development, and, therefore, the two should go hand-in-hand (Vygotsky, 1978). It follows that children who have social skills deficits, should receive extra social skills training. It is the concern of this researcher, informing the purpose of her study, that the recent emphasis on academic performance (Calkins et al., 2012), to the detriment of social skills training (Cohen, 2007) will affect children severely, retarding their intellectual and social growth.

While various theories inform teaching methodology, there exists no real consensus on whether social skills instruction or primary academic skills instruction is more important, particularly in the instruction of children with learning deficits or disabilities (Miller, Lane, & Wehby, 2005). Low academic achievement among a school's students is always a cause for concern, but the reason for it is not always clear. This leads to the specific problem statement, discussed in the following section.

Problem Statement

Some children have poor social skills. Research by Gillian and Shahar (2006) has indicated that children who lack adequate social skills often find various difficulties at school, including peer rejection, behavior problems, and poor academic achievement. Estes, Rivera, Bryan, Cali, and Dawson (2011) caution that children, especially high-functioning ones, often demonstrate a considerable discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement, suggesting that academic evaluations (such as standardized testing) are a poor method for assessing these children's cognitive skills. In researching the problem of lagging social skills in relation to social skills education for children with autism, there was very little evidence to indicate a need to develop the social skills for children who are not on the autism spectrum. While much literature exists regarding the strategies for teaching children with social skills deficits and the social skills training for children, there is a relative lack of literature regarding how social skills training of children could improve both their academic and social skills (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Virtually every educator and educational institution at the elementary level has some concept of a strategy for mixing academic and social skills instruction (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011), but far fewer have cohesive strategies in place for students with social skills deficits, which is a particular dilemma when such students are placed in general education classrooms (Williams, 2001).

By understanding how the development of non-cognitive skills impact the academic achievement of students from a rural middle school in West Georgia, education experts can gain a more comprehensive understanding on the relationship between non-cognitive skills and academic achievement, and whether non-cognitive skills can help students attain success both in and out of school. The general problem of this study is the continued existence of the

achievement gap in social skills (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013; Reardon, 2013) despite numerous scholars contending that the development of non-cognitive skills may be able to raise students' success both in and out of school (Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012; Farrington et al., 2012; Garcia, 2014; Olson, 2012; Sancassiani et al., 2015; Tough, 2012). The specific problem of this study is the low social skill ratings of adolescents in a rural middle school in West Georgia, and whether the intervention of non-cognitive skills instruction via stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* can help raise these students' scores on performance benchmark tests by improving their non-cognitive skills.

Purpose

This purpose of this quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design study is to examine the effect of implementing programs in social skills development using William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, a series of stories meant to teach and illustrate social skills and proper behavior to children, on the social skills among adolescents in Grade 7. The dependent variables were social skills ratings. The researcher generally defined social skills as verbal and non-verbal communication with others as measured by the Social Skills Improvement System - Rating Scale (SSIS-RS). The independent variable was the type of instruction received. Participation of adolescents in the treatment group received social skills instruction consisting of instruction using William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, a series of stories meant to teach and illustrate social skills. The control group received regular instruction or those participants who did not take part in the social skills instruction. The researcher considered pre-test social skills as covariates and measured them using the SSIS-RS.

Significance of the Study

Social skills are a specific requirement for verbal and non-verbal communication with others. Inadequate social skills impede children's ability to interact with others in accordance with social conventions, which may affect both their academic and social development (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). If implementing social skills interventions will help to improve self-esteem, self-concept, and self-awareness, it can also help to increase academic achievement (Komarraju, Ramsey, & Rinella, 2013). This study proposes that the implementation of social skills instruction with all children can have a significant impact upon both academic and social skills for all children involved. If educators do not provide time to learn socialization for students through activities such as breaks, and interaction time at lunch, then they must teach it implicitly using allotted time for academic instruction (Madu & Ebere, 2016). If students do not learn socialization adequately on their own during recess, lunch breaks and home, teacher-initiated interaction would prove to be a good activity to fill this gap (Cornwell, Mustard, & Van Parys, 2013).

In terms of pedagogy for students with social skills deficits, it is of critical importance that even though these students may be deemed socially deficient, that the instruction of such students contains a balance of social and academic skill training, just as it should for normal students (Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014). The proposed study could add to the existing knowledge and pedagogy of the instruction of children with social skills deficits.

Research Questions

The researcher addresses the following research question in this research study:

RQ1: Is there a difference among social skill ratings, as measured by the Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale, of seventh-grade students who receive social skills

instruction via stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* and those who do not while controlling for pre-test social skills?

Definitions

In the study of social skills among seventh-grade students, certain terms are used that need clarification and explanation.

1. *Academic Achievement* - Academic achievement for this study is the measurable amount of growth on academic measures (Oakhill & Cain, 2012).
2. *Communication* - "Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the sender." (Stott, 2011,)
3. *Diagnosis* - The art or act of identifying a disease from its signs and symptoms (Galvin & Sadowsky, 2012). A diagnosis for this study may be completed by the school psychologist or a medical doctor.
4. *Reading Inventory (RI)* - The Reading Inventory is the schools widely used reading assessment tool, which provides immediate actionable data regarding students' reading levels, based upon a Lexile number. The RI predicts grade level attainment in the area of reading and acts as an indicator to predict future growth and growth toward state mandated assessments (Primi, Santos, John, & De Fruyt, 2016).
5. *Social Skills* - People with social skills deficit or issues are known to cause serious problems in everyday life (Gresham, 2015). Examples of social skill issues are as

follows: does not respond to name by 12 months of age, avoids eye contact, prefers to play alone, does not share interests with others, only interacts to achieve a desired goal, has flat or inappropriate facial expressions, does not understand personal space boundaries, avoids or resists physical contact, is not comforted by others during distress, has trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about own feelings (Centers for Disease Control, 2017).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter includes discussion about the topics related to cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills, and academic achievement, reading and social skills, and about Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*. This review of related literature includes different sections. The chapter starts with the introduction. Second, the researcher provides a discussion on the theoretical framework chosen for this study. Third, the researcher provides a discussion about the empirical evidence. Fourth, the researcher presents a discussion of the related literature section, which incorporates the role of personality in life outcomes including academic achievement and the role of non-cognitive skills in life outcomes, and academic achievement. Finally, a summary and conclusion are provided, and the organization of the next chapter.

Theoretical Framework

According to Bruner (1960), knowledge is constructed by learners through their own creation of meaning through their own active process of building and developing knowledge. Students are tasked with generating new knowledge from concepts and ideas taught by their teachers, thus allowing the students to become independent learners and critical thinkers (Malik, Khurshid, Rehana, & Nazim, 2013). There are three basic principles of learning: the role of structure in learning, the spiral curriculum, and discovery learning (Bruner, 1960, 1967; Jiang & Perkins, 2013).

Instead of the traditional method of learning where teachers instruct their students on facts and techniques, Bruner (1960) advocated for the teaching of structure, where a general picture is taught of how things relate to each other, thus allowing the students to figure out the relations of things they have experienced before with the rest of their experiences. This means that educators help students to become inductive thinkers, able to bridge knowledge encountered

at all stages of their lives (Jiang & Perkins, 2013). Furthermore, Bruner (1960) advocated for a spiral curriculum, where instructors visit and revisit instructional activities to engender independent learning. As students go further into their schooling, Bruner (1960) argued that the basic ideas of their education must be revisited multiple times in order for the students to build on them and be able to grasp the full formal apparatus that goes with them. Lastly, Bruner (1967) developed his concept of discovery learning, which operates on the assumption that students utilize their current knowledge and experiences to generate facts and relationships about the world. Based on this assumption, Bruner (1967) contended that students would be more likely to retain and make use of knowledge if they have come to know about facts independently.

Bruner's (1960, 1967) constructivism may apply to this study as non-cognitive skills, as well as other non-cognitive skills, are often taught to students through the use of narratives that allow the students to generate meaning on their own, based on their past experiences and current knowledge. Given that the United States today is comprised of many different cultures and traditions, it would be prudent to ensure that educational experts hear and learn from the different voices in the school community. Certain cultures may value different non-cognitive skills, and at different degrees. For instance, some may value individuality, while others may value collectivism. Based on Bruner's (1960, 1967) theory of constructivism, the inculcation of non-cognitive skills in American students needs to be sensitive to their current knowledge and past experiences, and add to them in order to facilitate effective learning.

Related Literature

An academic achievement gap in reading continues to exist in the United States, which has been argued to be based on various inequalities based on income (Leu, Forzani, Rhoads, Maykel, Kennedy, & Timbrell, 2014; NCES, 2013), geographical location (Hopkins, Harris,

Stoll, & Mackay, 2014), and race or ethnicity (Meyer, 2013; Rothstein, 2015). In recent years, this has not just remained steady but has risen, and may continue to do so if left unaddressed (Hewitt, 2011; Reardon, 2013). In response to this, the NCLB act was implemented by the United States government in 2001 to address the academic achievement gaps on the core subjects of math and reading, primarily by increasing the accountability of teachers and schools in the academic achievement of their students. They determined this by measuring their students' math and reading scores on a national standardized test (Garcia, 2014; Hewitt, 2011; Meyer, 2013).

While standardized tests were able to measure students' cognitive skills in math and reading, they are unable to provide a comprehensive picture of what students have actually learned and also do not capture data on other factors that contribute towards the students' academic achievement (Au, 2014; Garcia, 2014). This means that the picture provided by standardized test results on a student's academic achievement is incomplete. Therefore, standardized test results served more as a way to retain the status quo in education and keeping the achievement gap in place (Hewitt, 2011). Some scholars have argued that standardized testing only serves as an accurate way to identify excellent test-takers rather than excellent students (Hewitt, 2011; Meyer, 2015). For instance, a student with a high IQ would be more likely to achieve high scores in standardized achievement tests because of his or her ability to learn independently, without the need for teacher instruction or guidance (Duckworth et al., 2012). On the other hand, it is more likely for a student with high self-control to achieve high grades on his or her report cards, because of his or her ability to persevere in class and behave positively. These are behaviors that experts do not strongly relate to having a high IQ (Duckworth et al., 2012). This supports Duckworth, Tsukuyama, and May (2010), who found that the non-cognitive skill of self-control prospectively predicts academic performance beyond

just intelligence, and provided evidence for the causal role of self-control on achievement unmoderated by IQ, gender, ethnicity, or income. The results of both studies lend support to the view that cognitive skills, such as those measured by standardized tests, may present only a limited perspective in understanding how to help students achieve academic success.

In response to the needed changes for the NCLB Act, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December 2015, which policymakers developed as an improvement on the NCLB's mission. With the passage of the ESSA, the United States government has reaffirmed the NCLB's emphasis on accountability on the part of both schools and students, while adjusting statewide assessments away from standardized tests by allowing the use of various measures of student learning and progress in determining academic achievement (The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, 2015).

While it remains to be seen how exactly the ESSA will improve upon the legacy of the NCLB, a promising development is the concerted movement away from standardized testing with nationwide benchmarks, and the stated openness toward different measures of student achievement, instead of test scores, which indicate cognitive skills (The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). In recent years, a number of scholars has argued for the importance of a more holistic conception of education, one that includes the development of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills in students (Garcia, 2014; Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Olson, 2012; Sancassiani et al., 2015; Tough, 2012). A recurring criticism of the high-stakes standardized testing required by the NCLB was its focus on cognitive skills, and its inability to capture data on the non-cognitive skills argued to be essential to a students' development and academic success (Duckworth et al., 2012; Farrington et al., 2012).

A number of scholars has argued for the role of personality in terms of realizing cognitive ability (Almlund, Duckworth, Heckman, & Kautz, 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2012, 2013).

According to Almlund et al. (2011), there are five personality traits that should serve as the basis of education intervention programs. These are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits represent a way of understanding the role of non-cognitive factors in what may appear to be purely cognitive issues, such as academic achievement.

Non-cognitive skills play just as much a role, if not more, in achieving success both in and out of school, because they help ensure the student's cognitive skills are used to its full effect (Farrington et al., 2012). For example, a student with a high IQ who does not have good study habits, time management skills, and help-seeking behaviors may be unable to realize the potential of their cognitive skills (Farrington et al., 2012). Such factors, based on non-cognitive skills, play just as much a role, if not more, in achieving success both in and out of school, because they help ensure the student's cognitive skills are used to its full effect (Farrington et al., 2012).

The NCLB act has failed to close the achievement gap by focusing on standardized high stakes testing (Hewitt, 2011), which measure cognitive skills in math and reading (Duckworth et al., 2012). A substantial gap remains in the reading achievement levels of American students (NCES, 2013), and it has been seen that current policies have so far been unsuccessful in bridging this gap (Reardon, 2013). New research (Duckworth et al., 2012) suggests that a shift toward a more holistic view of education that emphasizes non-cognitive skills such as self-control and grit in concert with cognitive skills can help close this research gap. The shift toward a more holistic view of education can also produce well-rounded students who are not just

academically equipped to succeed, but socially and emotionally able to utilize their academic knowledge to the betterment of their lives (Farrington et al., 2012; Olson, 2012).

The Role of Personality in Life Outcomes

The role of personality in life outcomes has a long tradition in the literature. Alfred Binet, who developed the Stanford-Binet IQ test that became ubiquitous in measuring the cognitive potential of individuals, believed that academic achievement requires more than just intelligence. In 1916, Binet and Simon singled out the personality traits of docility (ability to listen and take heed of instruction), regularity in habits (or self-control), and continuity of effort (or perseverance) as essential for a student to succeed in school. By the same token, success in life often depends not just on intelligence, but the ability to be self-aware of one's own emotions and recognize the emotions of those around them, which is now recognized as emotional intelligence (Ealias & George, 2012). This means that, without the appropriate personality, an otherwise intelligent person might underachieve in school and in life, despite having the cognitive ability to do so.

Vygotsky (1978) in 1934 and Kohlberg in 1971 also took up the idea that academic success requires both intelligence and the appropriate personality traits. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, an individual's social development is a precursor to cognition, and both consciousness and cognition are products of social behavior. This means that social development is necessary for cognitive development to occur (Vygotsky, 1978). Kohlberg (1971) also emphasized the importance of social development with respect to the six stages of moral development: the punishment and obedience orientation, the instrument relativist orientation, the interpersonal concordance orientation, the law and order orientation, the social contract legalistic orientation, and the universal ethical-principle orientation. Researchers call

the first two stages the pre-conventional level, the next two stages are called the conventional level, and the last two stages are called the post-conventional level (Kohlberg, 1971).

Researchers hierarchically integrate all six stages in that individuals who move to higher stages do not forget what they have learned from the lower stages (Kohlberg, 1971). Educators highlight that social development affects moral development because an individual's exposure to society and its norms influences how they would progress morally. For example, in the first stage, children perceive certain things to be right because of an authority figure. In the second stage, children learn that there are many viewpoints on a single issue, which frees them from the moral constraints imposed upon them by authority figures, that is, unless they desire something only an authority figure can provide. This moral development of individuals, according to Kohlberg (1971), relies on how they view other persons. Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983) noted that, in stage 1, individuals only care about themselves, their interests, and the commands of the authority figures to determine what is right, while in stage 6, individuals recognize how limited individual viewpoints are, and will seek to treat all viewpoints respectfully. Essentially, according to Kohlberg (1971), individuals learn to be moral by passing through the stages of moral development and by internalizing the insights they gained along the way, leading to the final stage, where a moral viewpoint based on universal respect is gained.

In recent years, scholars have conducted studies on the role of personality in life outcomes. While researchers strongly support that cognitive ability can predict social and economic success, studies have shown that personality can play just as large a role in predicting positive life outcomes (Almlund et al., 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2012, 2013). There are five personality factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

The five personality factors, collectively called the Big Five, are the product of a widely shared consensus between scholars (Almlund et al., 2011).

Some scholars have contended that these personality factors are not universal, and they find them chiefly in Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic populations (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Nonetheless, the Big Five personality factors are a broadly accepted construct to delineate variations in personality, and has yet to be falsified in industrialized societies, such as the United States (Gurven, von Rueden, Massenkoff, Kaplan, & Lero Vie, 2013). Schools in industrialized societies can, therefore, use this framework as the basis for their programs to help their students reach success (Primi et al., 2016).

It is important to understand personality factors because an individual's personality may influence the way in which they construe experiences. Negative outcomes may be taken differently, and produce different motivations, depending on the perceiving individual's personality. For instance, Rauthmann, Sherman, Nave, and Funder (2015) conducted a study where they rated situations by those who experienced the situations themselves, and those who read the participants' factual descriptions of those situations. It was found that the same situation could be perceived differently, which was explained as due to the participants' difference in personality (Rauthmann et al., 2015). Neurotic individuals may be more likely to blow situations out of proportion and feel hopeless for reasons that would motivate highly conscientious individuals. The personality of a specific person can bring about particular emotions that could make it easier or harder to deal with certain situations and problems (Rauthmann et al., 2015).

According to Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, and Osborne (2012), the emotions of a student during their schooling play an important role in bringing about positive life outcomes.

They conducted a study to explore whether stress is related to the personality factor of neuroticism, and it was hypothesized that stress would be positively correlated to emotion focused coping and negative affect, while being negatively correlated with task-focused coping, positive affect, and emotional intelligence (Saklofske et al., 2012). Undergraduate students (53 male and 185 female), 238 in total, were asked to answer surveys designed to measure their emotional intelligence, positive and negative affect schedule, perceived stress, and life satisfaction (Saklofske et al., 2012).

In emotion-focused coping, an individual will respond to a stressful situation by controlling their emotional response, such as by emphasizing a stressful situation's positive aspects (Völlink, Bolman, Eppingbroek, & Dehue, 2013). In task-focused coping, an individual will respond to a stressful situation by attempting to solve the situation causing them stress, such as by asking for outside help (Völlink et al., 2013). Researchers have described emotion-focused coping as maladaptive, while task-focused coping as adaptive (Saklofske et al., 2012). This is because individuals who use emotion-focused coping tend to elide attempting to resolve a stressful situation, believing that the stressful situation is beyond their control, while task-focused coping is used when individuals believe it is possible for them to resolve the stressful situation that is bothering them (Völlink et al., 2013).

Researchers hypothesize positive correlation between stress and neuroticism, emotion-focused coping, and negative affect supported by their results of the study as well as the hypothesized negative correlation between stress and task-focused coping, positive affect, and emotional intelligence (Saklofsket et al., 2012). Because of the role personality plays in the perceptions of situations and the role of perceptions on motivations, it is therefore important to understand how each of the personality factors in the Big Five can impact the motivations of

individuals, and its effects on life outcomes. Most of the literature on personality factors and achievement have centered on conscientiousness and openness to experience. The researcher discusses next their impact on life outcomes based on the literature.

Conscientiousness. Conscientious individuals tend to be organized, disciplined, deliberate, and value diligence and perseverance in the pursuit of their goals (Almlund et al., 2011). Individuals with high conscientiousness tend to be able to resist stress, work hard, and avoid temptation (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Because of these reasons, this personality factor is the one that has consistently been seen to have the highest impact on achievement (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016; Farrington et al., 2012; Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012; Rikoon et al., 2016; Sakflopske et al., 2012; Zuffiano et al., 2013). Researchers associate a positive correlation between conscientiousness and achievement in numerous fields. Among the Big Five, it is the most predictive of various positive life outcomes (Almlund et al., 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2012).

For instance, in the field of leadership, Marinova, Moon, and Kamdar (2014) affirmed that conscientiousness was the most consistent predictor of individual performance and performance motivation. Conscientious individuals tend to perform their assigned tasks well and they are less susceptible to suddenly lose interest in their assigned tasks. Marinova et al. (2014), following the lead of previous researchers in personality research, conceptualized conscientiousness as being comprised of two facets, namely, achievement-striving and duty, where achievement-striving leaders tend to be self-oriented, while dutiful leaders are other oriented.

This means that achievement-striving leaders are competitive and are motivated to achieve as a means of establishing competence, while dutiful leaders are less competitive and

more social, motivated by building trust and fulfilling commitments and obligations to other people (Marinova et al., 2014). Both kinds of conscientious leaders were able to exhibit strong leadership potential and would likely succeed when placed in leadership positions, although the fact of different motivations driving them could mean that specific situations could suit one or the other facet of conscientiousness more. For example, achievement-striving individuals would be more suited for situations where competitiveness is necessary for the task at hand, while dutiful individuals would be more suited for situations where teamwork is necessary for task completion (Marinova et al., 2014).

In the field of health and well-being, conscientiousness is starting to gain a consensus as a strong predictor of length of life, as conscientious individuals tend to eschew vices such as drinking excessively or smoking (English & Carstensen, 2014). Furthermore, the health choices that they make tend to hold over long periods of time, as in the study conducted by Takahashi, Edmonds, Jackson, and Roberts (2013) regarding the preventative health-related behaviors and self-perceived health of people over an interval of three years. They provided personality and health questionnaires in two waves to participants whose ages ranged from 19 to 94 years. They found that changes in the conscientiousness of the participants were significantly correlated with changes in both their health-related behaviors and their self-perceived health (Takahashi et al., 2013).

Hampson, Edmonds, Goldberg, Dubanoski, and Hillier (2014) supported that conscientiousness is used to predict positive health outcomes over long periods of time, where participants in Hawaii were tested in childhood for their Big Five traits (M age = 10 years) and again 40 years later, where they were tested for biomarkers of health (M age = 9 years). After controlling for the participants' other personality factors and their demographic characteristics,

such as gender and ethnicity, the authors found that the participants who showed lower levels of conscientiousness in the initial test were found to show higher levels of physiological dysregulation, higher rates of obesity, and worse lipid profiles in the test 40 years later (Hampson et al., 2014).

Researchers found the correlation between conscientiousness and achievement in adolescents in school as well. A recent study conducted by Dumfart and Neubauer (2016) focused on the correlation between academic achievement, intelligence, and conscientiousness. The authors studied a sample of 498 eighth-grade students in Austria, and performed hierarchical regressions for the participants' GPA, science subjects, and language subjects, including their intelligence, the five personality factors, self-discipline, grit, self-efficacy, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, and test anxiety (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016).

The results showed a very strong correlation of intelligence and conscientiousness with school achievement, and on the participants' achievement on language subjects and their GPA, with no other predictors able to explain the variance (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016). In science subjects, the researchers found only self-discipline to be able to explain some variance (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016). They found intelligence, a cognitive predictor, to be a strong predictor of school achievement; however, conscientiousness, a non-cognitive predictor, was found to be very strong as well (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016).

This noted importance of both intelligence and conscientiousness in predicting academic achievement supports the findings of Richardson et al. (2012). This suggests that schools or policies that aim to raise student performance should focus on both factors, with particular focus on conscientiousness, given the relative ease with which it can be inculcated and its considerable effect on achievement (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016). The low costs of training students in

conscientious behaviors such as proper time management and delaying gratification can result in high rewards in terms of positive life outcomes by educating them on ways to realize their full cognitive potential (Farrington et al., 2012).

Openness to experience. Individuals who are open to experience tend to be imaginative and curious, valuing novelty, creativity, and avoiding convention (Almlund et al., 2011). They prefer a variety of experiences and ideas, are sensitive towards aesthetics, and are intellectually curious (Reisz, Boudreaux, & Ozer, 2013). The relationship between openness to experience and positive life outcomes may be found in the ability of individuals high in this personality factor to adjust to new situations and approach situations and problems from fresh angles (Almlund et al., 2011). Researchers suggest that an individual's openness to experience can increase the more they achieve, and the added openness could then lead to higher achievement (Nieß & Zacher, 2015).

Nieß and Zacher (2015) argued this point in their study on the personality factors being both predictors and outcomes of job promotions, using personality characteristics and job status data from the Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia survey. There were 3,489 participants in the study, with the mean age being 42.6 years old. With regards to openness to experience, the authors hypothesized that openness to experience positively predicts job promotions into managerial and professional positions, and also that job promotions into managerial and professional positions will predict higher levels of openness to experience over time (Nieß & Zacher, 2015). Researchers used a large longitudinal dataset to support both the hypotheses.

According to Nieß and Zacher (2015), the personality factor of openness to experience predicted the participants' job promotions into managerial and professional positions, while the

rest in the Big Five had no statistically significant effects. A possible reason for this was the ability for individuals who exhibit high openness to experience to be intellectually flexible, creative, and able to generate new ideas, which are all particularly important in higher job positions (Nieß & Zacher, 2015). Another interesting finding of the study was the fact that investigators found openness to experience to be the only factor increased in line with job promotions into managerial and professional positions (Nieß & Zacher, 2015). A potential explanation for this could be that individuals in these job positions face more unexpected situations that necessitate the use of creative and novel thinking to address, thus increasing their openness (Nieß & Zacher, 2015).

In the field of health and well-being, research has shown that openness to experience related to better health outcomes, both physically and mentally. In a study by Turiano, Spiro, and Mroczek (2012), the authors conducted an exploratory factor analysis in a sample of older men to extract distinct aspects of openness to experience, after which they conducted a proportional hazards to examine mortality risk over a period of 18 years. They used data from 1,349 men from the Veterans Affairs Normative Aging Study, who completed the Goldberg Markers of the Big Five personality traits between 1990 and 1991, their ages ranging from 45 to 89 ($M = 64.9$). The results obtained revealed that a one standard deviation increase in creativity was associated with a 12% decrease in mortality risk (Turiano et al., 2012).

Creativity, an aspect of openness to experience, was able to predict mortality beyond the participants' level of education and their scores on the Seriousness of Illness Rating Scale. A potential explanation given was that higher levels of creativity allowed individuals to adjust to a wider range of life experiences and challenges, especially unexpected ones, and this is important specifically for older adults, who face a number of challenges related to their age (Turiano et al.,

2012). Creative individuals constantly use their abilities to discover and retain novel approaches to the challenges of life, and can therefore lead to a decrease in mortality risk (Turiano et al., 2012).

Researchers have associated openness to experience with better memory performance among older adults. Terry, Puente, Brown, Faraco, and Miller (2013) conducted a study on 50 community-dwelling older adults (29 cognitively intact and 21 with questionable dementia), and their results showed that there is a significant relationship between an individual's openness to experience and memory performance. They suggested that, by constantly using their cognitive abilities for new activities throughout their lives, individuals who exhibit higher levels of openness are protected from memory decline (Terry et al., 2013). This is important because researchers in studies have shown that instructors can teach and inculcate openness to experience, even with older adults, which highlights the benefits of this personality factor.

Jackson, Hill, Payne, Roberts, & Stine-Morrow (2012) conducted a study on the possibility of increasing the openness to experience personality factor of adults through the use of an intervention program aimed at increasing cognitive ability. The program involved 16 weeks of inductive reasoning, along with weekly crossword puzzles and Sudoku. Around 183 adults (64 males) served as the participants of the study, from 60 to 94 years of age ($M = 72.9$). The results obtained showed that participants who completed the intervention program increased their openness compared to the control group (Jackson et al., 2012). These findings mirror those in the study conducted by Nieß and Zacher (2015), in particular their hypothesis that the more that an individual is exposed to different situations where creative thinking is required, the more likely that that individual would exhibit higher openness to experience. In other words, investigators, through evidence, suggest that being open to new experiences is a resource that

students must utilize regularly, or it may be lost or dulled with age. Furthermore, they can train this, even to older adults (Jackson et al., 2012).

While the Big Five personality factors are important, there remains a paucity of research on the relation between them and positive life outcomes. However, experts link a number of non-cognitive skills to specific personality factors. In the next sub-section, a discussion will be had on non-cognitive skills and what scholars have seen with regards to their role in positive life outcomes. The researcher supports the important role of personality in positive life outcomes in the literature. Investigators often correlate the difference in how an individual reacts to a specific situation with the personality of the individual perceiving the situation, as opposed to the individual's cognitive skills.

Researchers have revealed certain personality factors to be more associated with positive life outcomes than other factors. Essentially, an individual's personality can help predict how they would deal with stressful situations, whether they would continue on or give up, whether they would be able to adjust to a novel situation and come up with creative solutions, all of which have been found to be important to individual achievement and success. Researchers associate some non-cognitive skills with certain personality factors. The researcher, in the next sub-section of this review will focus on the different kinds of non-cognitive skills that were studied in the literature, and the evidence on their effects on positive life outcomes, including academic achievement. In particular, the researcher discusses the non-cognitive skills of grit, self-control, metacognitive strategies, social skills, and creativity and their effects on achievement will be explained.

The Role of Non-Cognitive Skills in Life Outcomes

In order to understand non-cognitive skills, it is essential to understand emotional intelligence. A number of scholars from various fields have affirmed the importance of emotional intelligence in positive life outcomes (Ealias & George, 2012; Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014; Pool & Qualter, 2012; Ruiz-Arranda et al., 2012; Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013b). Researchers characterize emotional intelligence as the ability of an individual to be self-aware of his or her own emotions while recognizing the emotions of those around them, and acting accordingly based on that information (Ealias & George, 2012; Schutte, Malouff Thorsteinsson, 2013a). Non-cognitive skills tend to be understood as skills that relate to emotional intelligence and are often measured by self-reporting questionnaires, compared to cognitive skills that relate to cognitive intelligence, traditionally measured by IQ scores (Saklofske et al., 2012;; Talarico et al., 2013). Investigators have found non-cognitive skills to better predict individual achievement compared to IQ scores or standardized test scores (Duckworth et al., 2012).

The data on the effects that non-cognitive skills have on positive life outcomes have been overwhelming. They have been positively associated with positive life outcomes in numerous fields, such as economics (Daly, Delaney, Egan, & Baumeister, 2015; Egan, Daly, & Delaney, 2016), well-being (Daly, Delaney, & Baumeister, 2015; Kleiman, Adams, Kashdan, & Riskind, 2013; Vainio & Daukantaite, 2015), education (Renzulli, 2012), and leadership (Renzulli & D'Souza, 2014). The next sub-sections are organized according to a specific non-cognitive skill and what scholars have seen with regards to their impact on positive life outcomes. These are grit, self-control, metacognitive strategies, social skills, and creativity.

Grit. This pertains to the ability of an individual to remain focused towards achieving a goal despite numerous hurdles and resist temptation in order to pursue higher achievements over easy self-gratification (Farrington et al., 2012). Investigators have positively linked this non-cognitive skill to higher achievement in numerous fields of study. The ability to persevere in service of a goal is a hallmark of gritty individuals, who tend to achieve more than their less gritty counterparts, despite similar cognitive abilities (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

In a study conducted by Von Culin, Tsukuyama, and Duckworth (2014), two cross-sectional studies were utilized to explore the motivational orientations correlates of grit, a trait related to the personality factor of conscientiousness; in particular, grit's two component facets, which are perseverance of effort and consistency of interests over time. They found that grit was associated with individuals who found meaning in activities that served a higher purpose and also engaged deeply in attention-heavy activities, while not allowing setbacks to deter them from their path (Von Culin et al., 2014). In essence, the presence and degree of grit in a person can help predict what they view to be important in life, which may or may not involve what we deem positive life outcomes (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, & Borghans, 2014). For instance, a person with a low level of grit may feel discouraged at setbacks and change pursuits, while a person with a high level of grit would not allow setbacks to interfere with their goal of pursuing activities they find higher in engagement and meaning (Von Culin et al., 2014).

The non-cognitive skill of grit is one of the most studied in terms of its correlation with motivation and individual achievement. A large number of studies have consistently shown a strong significance between grit and positive life outcomes, including academic achievement. For example, in a cross-sectional study conducted by Suzuki, Tamesue, Asahi, and Ishikawa (2015), the authors attempted to reveal whether there was an association between grit and

performance, both at work and at school. They sent out self-report questionnaires to 2,404 adults in Japan, ranging from 20 to 59 years old, of which they chose 1,134 participants. The results they obtained showed that high levels of grit in the participants acted as a strong predictor for individual performance, both at work and at school (Suzuki et al., 2015). Furthermore, they found grittier participants to be more engaged with their work, despite controlling for other factors, such as age, income, education level, orientations to happiness, and Big Five traits (Suzuki et al., 2015). This extra engagement that comes from higher grit can explain why individuals with higher grit have been found to achieve more at work and also at school, in that they freely choose to learn and work hard to achieve their goals.

Other studies have bolstered the link revealed by Suzuki et al. (2015), an example of which can be found in Reraki, Celik, and Saricam (2015). They sought to examine if there was a relationship between grit and both academic motivation and achievement. They chose a total of 334 undergraduate students in Turkey through convenience sampling, which served as the participants for the study, ranging from 19 to 25 years old ($M = 21.2$). They answered the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S), which measured their grit on a 5-point Likert scale, and the Academic Motivation Scale, which measured their academic motivation on a 7-point scale. They found that grit positively predicted academic achievement and was positively related to academic motivation (Reraki et al., 2015). They revealed academic achievement is predicted positively by academic motivation, which supports the notion that highly motivated individuals tend to achieve more than less motivated ones (Reraki et al., 2015). Lastly, they found that grit mediated the relationship between both academic motivation and achievement to some extent. This again provides evidence for the contention that non-cognitive skills can make up for gaps in cognitive ability or pure talent, because of its positive relationship with motivation.

Self-control. Self-control pertains to the ability of an individual to resist short-term temptations to pursue activities with higher meaning (Farrington et al., 2012). The differing rates of achievement among similarly intelligent people were the subject of a study conducted by Stadler, Aust, Becker, Niepel, and Greiff (2016), by making reference to the non-cognitive skill of self-control. Despite similar cognitive abilities, students often vary in terms of their academic achievement, and the researcher searched for possible ways to explain this phenomenon by a number of scholars. Investigators use self-control as a predictor of positive life outcomes in numerous studies, mainly because individuals with high self-control tend to resist short-lived temptations in the pursuit of a larger goal (Ridder, Lensvelt-Mulders, Kinfenauer, Stok, & Baumeister, 2012; Galla & Duckworth, 2015; Hoffmann, Fisher, Luhmann, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2014). This allows them more time and resources to better achieve their goals.

Stadler et al. (2016) conducted a study on 150 German university students who answered a measure of general cognitive ability as well as Brief Self-Control Scale, with the students' GPAs used as an objective indicator of their academic achievement, with their personal ratings as a subjective indicator of their academic achievement (Stadler et al., 2016). The researchers, through the results obtained, supported the conclusions in the studies reviewed above, in that Stadler et al. (2016) found that the non-cognitive skill of self-control contributes toward explaining the variance in both GPA and subjective academic achievement, despite cognitive ability being controlled for. Again, non-cognitive skills, in this case self-control, was argued as potentially more important than cognitive skills in predicting academic achievement, as individuals who can efficiently manage themselves and their desires would procrastinate less and study more, thus possibly compensating for any differences in cognitive skills (Stadler et al., 2016).

Metacognitive strategies. These refer to strategies that individuals develop and utilize to influence their own thinking process by choosing strategies for thinking that would work best for their learning by increasing their self-regulatory competence (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). Essentially, metacognitive strategies involve a higher-order thinking about an individual's own thinking process, wherein he or she is self-aware of strengths and weaknesses and act on that knowledge to maximize their thinking process. For example, successful students are often highly aware of when they are performing their best, and make use of strategies to enable that. Some instances of these are goal-setting, planning and organizing, directing their own learning, monitoring their own work, and self-reflection (Uchino et al., 2015).

The positive effects of metacognitive strategies are especially apparent in situations where self-efficacy and independent learning is required. Pellas (2014) conducted a study on the influence of three factors, one of which was metacognitive self-regulation, on student engagement in online learning programs. Online learners served as the participants for this study, of which 153 were graduates and 152 were postgraduates, for a total of 305 participants. The investigator used a three-step hierarchical regression analysis, and found that all three factors positively correlated with cognitive and emotional engagement factors, and negatively correlated with behavioral factors (Pellas, 2014). The investigator, through this finding, supports the importance of metacognitive strategies in situations where students need independent learning for achievement, such as in online learning courses.

Social skills. These refer to ability to have and maintain positive interactions with other people (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Some examples are developing good communication skills, being empathic, maintaining a network of friends, being cooperative and willing to work on a team, being friendly, regulating emotions, and maintaining a firm hold on social situations both

verbally and non-verbally (Müller et al., 2014; Gutman & Schoon, 2013). They argue these skills to be important for positive life outcomes, as individuals adept at these tend to develop relationships with other people easily, thus allowing them to tap into a larger network of social supports that can act as a shield for stresses (Müller et al., 2014). This added resistance can make a large difference in pursuing positive life outcomes.

In a cross-sectional observational study conducted by Müller et al. (2014), they attempted to reveal the relationship between social skills and social support, depression, participation, and quality of life in individuals with spinal cord injury. The participants were Swiss, 16 years old and above, with traumatic or non-traumatic spinal cord injuries. They found that social skills and their dimensions of expressivity, sensitivity, and control, positively correlated to social support and quality of life, while negatively correlated with depressive symptoms (Müller et al., 2014). This may be due to the fact that the high presence of social skills in certain participants allowed them to perceive higher levels of social support, which then increased their quality of life and decreased or eliminated their depressive symptoms.

In terms of academic achievement, researchers have found social skills to correlate with positive outcomes. In a study conducted by Rabbani et al (2015) in India, the academic record of 504 eighth graders and data on their social skills developed from a 4-point Likert scale instrument were gathered to determine the relationship between social skills and academic achievement. They revealed that there is a significant relationship between the two. The investigators, in this finding, supported the study conducted by Gresham (2015) where children at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) were provided social skills interventions in order to reveal if social skills instructions can be useful in decreasing the risk for EBD. A meta-analytic review exposed that 65% of students with EBD can improve with social skills

interventions, because social skills enable students to achieve more academically and decrease the chances for disruptive behaviors that can diminish their academic pursuits (Gresham, 2015).

Other studies have provided additional evidence for this relation between social skills and achievement. For example, a study conducted by Montroy et al. (2014) attempted to reveal the role of social skills and problem behaviors in self-regulation and achievement in math and science for preschool children. There were 118 preschool-aged children who served as the participants for the study. They tested them on their behavioral self-regulation utilizing the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders task, and on math using the Test of Early Mathematics Ability (3rd edition). They were also tested on reading using the Letter-Word Identification subscale of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement, the phonological awareness subtest of the Test of Preschool Early Literacy, and the frequency with which the children used uppercase and lowercase letters correctly (Montroy et al., 2014). The children's teachers provided data on their social skills and problem behaviors.

The authors hypothesized that higher rates of self-regulation would lead to better social skills and reduce problem behaviors, both of which were expected to produce gains in academic achievement, given the social nature of a classroom environment (Montroy et al., 2014). They used a structural equation modeling approach for mediation analysis and found that a child's social skills and problem behaviors both served as a part of system where behavioral self-regulation can influence their achievement in literacy (Montroy et al., 2014). This suggests a possible relation between behavioral self-regulation and social skills, which in turn is related with achievement (Montroy et al., 2014). Additionally, this study provides evidence that social skills matter in the pursuit of academic achievement and other positive life outcomes, even in young children.

Creativity. This refers to the ability of an individual to generate original and exciting ideas or products that are also suitable for the task at hand, meaningful, and valuable (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Creative individuals tend to be valued for their innovative thinking and ability to conceive of new and exciting ideas, which is necessary for establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage in any industry (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). This results in most organizations to actively seek them out to be groomed for leadership positions (Kelley & Kelley, 2012). Creativity is often treated as valuable in its own right, that is, the benefits of training students to be creative may not be immediately apparent with respect to their achievement, but may be useful in itself.

Investigators have conducted a number of studies on the role of creativity in achievement in school, and most have found that creative individuals do not necessarily make for excellent achievers. For instance, a descriptive study conducted by Madu and Ebere (2016) examined 110 students in Nigeria to determine the relationship between creativity and academic achievement. They found that no significant relationship existed between the two variables, which suggested that creativity should be understood as an independent trait that has no bearing on academic achievement (Madu & Ebere, 2016). The results of this study supported the conclusions offered in the study conducted by Olatoye, Akintunde, and Yakasai (2010), who also attempted to determine the relationship between creativity and academic achievement. Olatoye et al. (2010) used three instruments, two of which were the Student Cumulative Grade Point Information Format to measure the students' academic achievement, and the Nicolas Holt Creativity Test to measure their creativity. There were 235 participants and they found that there was no relationship between creativity and academic achievement.

However, these findings do not necessarily mean that creativity has no place in academics. Olatoye et al. (2010) noted the possibility that current education systems and modes of measuring academic achievement may be limited if creativity does not lead to achievement. If creativity is an inherently valuable goal, education systems or modes of measuring academic achievement that are unable to turn creative individuals into achievers may need improvement (Olatoye et al., 2010). This may suggest that the non-relationship between creativity and academic achievement is something that must be changed, and barriers to creativity in universities must be identified and addressed, instead of maintaining the current system (Nordin & Malik, 2015). The inherently valuable nature of creativity is more apparent in the field of business and leadership, where there is a consensus that creativity is essential for success and must be fostered among both employees and leaders. A consequence of globalization is the economic outlook where knowledge is deemed a product or service, which means that today's organization leaders must foster environments where their workers are allowed to be creative, innovative, and critical, in order to achieve success (Anderson et al., 2014; Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj, 2013; Kelley & Kelley, 2012; Nordin & Malik, 2015).

Non-cognitive Skills and Education

Education is essential to the success of any modern country (Moore, Lippman, & Ryberg, 2015). The literature on the relationship between non-cognitive skills and positive life outcomes supports the value of possessing these skills. While cognitive skills, often measured through standardized test scores or report card grades, are important in that researchers use them to predict positive life outcomes, non-cognitive skills must not be sidelined in schools because they too predict positive life outcomes and may in fact be valuable in their own right (Moore et al., 2014). According to Garcia (2014), there are emotional, social, and democratic citizenship skills

that are unquestionably important, such as “self-confidence, respect for others, ability to build consensus, and willingness to tolerate alternative viewpoints” (p. 7). As discussed earlier, there remains a danger that the achievement gap in education will grow in the coming years.

Intervention programs designed to fill this gap have so far failed to live up to expectations, as gaps based on socioeconomic status and race, primarily, continue to exist. A reason why this might be so is the focus of programs on shoring up students’ cognitive skills, while leaving their non-cognitive skills unaddressed. These skills, valuable for the flourishing of any democracy, are not automatically learned, and must be inculcated in schools in order to produce knowledgeable, compassionate citizens who are able to work for the greater good (Garcia, 2014).

According to Farrington et al. (2012), the best ways to improve students’ academic behaviors, such as studying and persevering through challenges, is through academic mindsets and learning strategies. They argued that the more that a student feels engaged in their schoolwork, the more likely it is they achieve academically. Investigators can highlight a student’s engagement regularity by the manner with which they attend class, complete assignments, participate in discussions, and place higher standards on themselves and their academic work (Farrington et al., 2012).

These behaviors do not necessarily come from having strong cognitive skills. As noted earlier, some students’ personalities may help them be more adept at certain non-cognitive skills that allow them to excel academically, while some personalities may make it more difficult to achieve (Almlund et al., 2011). For instance, it was found that more neurotic students are prone to emotion-focused coping and tend to take setbacks and difficulties more seriously than others, resulting in their lower rates of achievement (Saklofske et al., 2012). A danger is that schools and teachers who may not be trained to identify such students could misdiagnose these students

as problem students who are simply unmotivated to achieve or do not care (Farrington et al., 2012). However, the researcher argues that a clear majority of students wants to succeed in school and in life, but certain barriers present themselves that may be perceived as impossible to get through (Farrington et al., 2012).

Students who are disengaged may be so due to a number of reasons unrelated to their cognitive ability. They may be unable to see the value of a certain subject, which their teachers may take for granted, and do not take the time to explain. They may be scared to participate in class due to a fear of public speaking or being embarrassed in front of their classmates. Such barriers to academic achievement can occur regardless of cognitive ability, and it is essential for today's schools to address them, if possible, to help their students achieve both in school and in life (Farrington et al., 2014). To do so, the responsibility of schools and teachers is not just to change their students' behaviors, but to create a classroom environment that support their students in developing the critical attitudes and learning strategies required for their success (Farrington et al., 2014; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). The growing awareness of the importance of non-cognitive skills, both in school and in life, has led to the development of programs that encourage social and emotional learning (SEL). These programs are designed to teach students social and emotional skills to supplement the cognitive skills they learn from traditional subjects, and help them achieve social and emotional resilience to better prepare them for life (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013).

A promising development is the RULER Approach, which is a social and emotional learning program grounded in theory and evidence (Rivers et al., 2013). The RULER Approach targets five emotional skills. These are: "recognizing emotions in oneself and others, understanding the causes and consequences of emotions, labeling emotions with an accurate and

diverse vocabulary, and expressing regulating emotions in socially appropriate ways” (Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2013, p. 531). Experts through these lessons aim to help students on their academics and their social and emotional health (Hagelskamp et al., 2013; Reyes et al., 2012).

In a study conducted by Hagelskamp et al. (2013), a 2-year cluster randomized controlled trial was utilized to test their hypotheses, one of which was classrooms in schools that implemented RULER would exhibit greater emotional and instructional support, and better classroom organization after 2 years. The researchers proved using data that showed RULER schools had higher scores in all criteria they searched for (Hagelskamp et al., 2013). Furthermore, research has indicated that the effect of the intervention of RULER during year 1 has partially explained the improvements at the end of year 2 (Hagelskamp et al., 2013). This finding provides empirical support to the contentions of scholars regarding the value of non-cognitive skills in fostering achievement. The success of RULER in improving academic achievement is argued to stem from its focus on non-cognitive factors, especially in emotional literacy training and the creation of classroom environments that engages and empowers students (Hagelskamp et al., 2013). The use of SEL may be especially useful for different kinds of students who have been marginalized by prior educational systems in the United States, such as those who come from disparate socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014; Hewitt, 2011; Reardon, 2013), those who appear to be problem students but are simply disengaged (Farrington et al., 2012; Garcia, 2014), and those whose social and emotional needs are not being met (Saklofske et al., 2012; Talarico et al., 2013).

While more empirical research needs to be done for the widespread development and institution of social and emotional learning programs in schools, the support in the literature

regarding the inherent value of social and emotional competence has been strong (Garcia, 2014; Myles-Pallister, Hassan, Rooney, & Kane, 2014). It is essential to adjust to the current scholarly understanding of non-cognitive skills, and its potential value, both in itself, and as a resource that can be used to fill in achievement gaps in the United States and the documented failure of approaches based on cognitive skills to fill these gaps.

Summary

The researcher, through the literature reviewed in this chapter, has supported the limitations of the currently dominant approach to education in this country, which has failed to address the achievement gap (Leu et al., 2014; NCES, 2013). Standardized tests are used to measure students' cognitive skills in math and reading, but have proven to be unable to measure non-cognitive skills that are, at minimum, just as important as cognitive skills in predicting positive life outcomes, such as academic achievement (Au, 2014; Farrington et al., 2012; Garcia, 2014). The role of personality in individual achievement is important to understand, as personality factors and their related traits influence the way in which experiences are construed. For instance, individuals that are more neurotic require stronger support systems in order to cope with challenges, while individuals who are more conscientious can forge on without much assistance (Almlund et al., 2011; Rauthmann et al., 2015; Saklofske et al., 2012). This variance in personality can help explain why two individuals with similar cognitive abilities can experience vastly different rates of success in life, as some individuals possess the non-cognitive skills required to adjust to the world, while some may need extra training at school to gain those same skills (Farrington et al., 2012; Stadler et al., 2016). Non-cognitive skills are valuable in themselves, because they are the hallmark of knowledgeable, compassionate citizens, which should be the intended graduates of our schools (Garcia, 2014). Furthermore, an individual who

is equipped with social and emotional skills often achieves more in life, due to their ability to maximize their cognitive skills through hard work, perseverance, and determination (Farrington et al., 2012; Garcia, 2014). Social and emotional instruction may, therefore, be an important resource for schools, as this provides the best chance for American students to excel academically, and also develop into responsible global citizens who can make the world a better place. This chapter provided a review of related literature on the issues surrounding non-cognitive skills instruction. The next chapter contains the research design and method for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design study is to examine the effect of implementing programs in social skills development using William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, a series of stories meant to teach and illustrate social skills and proper behavior to children, on the social skills among adolescents in Grade 7. The researcher in this study seeks to assist adolescents, between 10 to 24 years old; therefore, the target population for this study was adolescents enrolled in Grade 7. This chapter contains the discussion of the research design used. In addition, the researcher discusses participants and the sampling procedure, the instrumentation used to measure the study, the data collection procedure, and data analysis conducted in the study.

Design

The researcher conducted a quantitative study using a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group research design to examine the impact of the participation in social skills instruction on the social skills ratings of adolescent participants. Investigators use this type of quasi-experimental research design when there is a pre-test and post-test for a treated and comparison group (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A quasi-experimental design is one that resembles an experimental design but lacks random assignment (Trochim, 2006). A quantitative research design is more appropriate for the proposed study than a qualitative design because a qualitative design would not allow the assessment of a direct relationship between two variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Quantitative methodologies require the use of quantitative measurement and statistical analysis to explain the topic being investigated (Mustafa, 2011). The treatment and the control group classes took a pre-assessment (before undergoing the social

skills instruction or regular instruction) and a post-assessment (after undergoing the social skills instruction or regular instruction) to measure the social skills before and after the interventions. The dependent variable was social skills ratings. Social skills are defined as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses (Gresham & Elliott, 1984).

The investigator based the research design for this study on predetermined student class assignments. The researcher chose students from assigned classes. There were two groupings in the study, and the independent variable was type of instruction received. One was the treatment group, and the other was the control group. The treatment group was seventh-grade students taking a language arts class who received social skills instruction via stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, and the control group was seventh grade students taking general education. The control group received regular instruction or those participants who did not take part in the social skills instruction. Different teachers taught the two sample groups (treatment and control). The researcher considered the pre-test social skills as covariates and measured using the SSIS-RS.

Research Questions

The researcher addressed the following research questions in this research study.

RQ1: Is there a difference in social skill ratings, as measured by the Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale, of seventh-grade students who receive social skills instruction via stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* and those who do not while controlling for pre-test social skills?

Hypotheses

The null hypothesis for this study was:

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the social skills ratings of seventh-grade students who received social skills instruction via stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* and those who do not while controlling for pre-test social skills.

Participants and Setting

Population

The target population for this study was all adolescents enrolled in seventh grade at a small, rural school district in West Georgia. The subjects of this study consisted of approximately 160 students enrolled in the school which has approximately 500 students. The researcher invited all six classes from the general education English class and conducted *a priori* power analysis using G*power software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2009). First, the researcher conducted an *a priori* power analysis considering the statistical test of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), a statistical power of 0.8, a medium effect size of 0.25 for an ANCOVA, a level of significance of 0.05, degrees of freedom of 1, two number of groups for the independent variable, and one covariate, which the pre-tested social skill. This yielded a minimum sample size of 128 samples which included 64 for the treatment group (Group 1) and another 64 for the control group (Group 2). One hundred twenty-eight (128) sets of data of the different study variables from the sample of Grade 7 students was the minimum required sample size in order to achieve the required statistical power for a quantitative study of 80%.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected students enrolled in a seventh-grade English class. These classes are made up of the entire population, approximately 160, seventh-grade students in the school. The mean age of all students was 12 +/-1. Students who are served through a variety of programs such as gifted and talented (26, 17%) along with those who are served in special needs programs, (20, 13%) are all considered part of the target population. The

students in the school have an ethnic make-up of 84% Caucasian, 15% African-American and 1% multi-racial. The school participates in the Title I program indicating that 60% of the students receive free or reduced lunches due to poverty. Three classes were the treatment classes and received the social skills instruction, and the other three classes were the control classes, or those that did not have social skills instruction but only the general education program with pre- and post-testing. The researcher used the pre-assigned classes, whether they were in the treatment or control group. She used a pre-assigned convenience sampling technique wherein seventh-grade adolescents who were assigned to each class and were willing to participate in this study were considered as participants.

Sample

The sample consisted of 128 seventh-grade students. There were 60 seventh-grade students in the control group and 68 seventh-grade students in the treatment group. In the control group there were 30 males and 30 females. In the treatment group, there were 38 males and 30 females. For the treatment group, there were 4 eleven-year-olds, 58 twelve-year-olds, and 6 thirteen-year-olds. The sample consisted of 107 Caucasian students, 20 African-American students, and 1 multi-racial student.

Control Group

The demographic information of the control group mirrors the treatment group, and the population. For age, mean age of the samples of seventh-grade students in the control group is 12+/-1. For the control group, there were 3 eleven-year-old students, 52 twelve-year-old students, and 5 thirteen-year-old students. For ethnicity, the majority of the samples of seventh-grade students in the control group were Caucasian, 84%. In the control group, there were 48 Caucasian students, 11 African American students, and 1 multi-racial student. For gender, there

was an equal number of male and female students. Of the students in the control group, there were 30 males and 30 females.

Treatment Group

The researcher summarized demographic information of age, ethnicity, and gender of the treatment group. There were a total of 68 students in the treatment group. For age, mean age of the samples of seventh-grade students in the treatment group is 12 (12+/-2). There were 4 eleven-year-olds, 58 twelve-year-olds, and 6 thirteen-year-olds. For ethnicity, the majority of the samples of seventh-grade students in the treatment group were Caucasian, 57, and 9 students were African American. For gender, there were eight more males, 38 to 30 females samples of seventh-grade students in the treatment group.

Table 1

Demographic Frequency Statistics

		Control	Treatment
Total ($n = 128$)		60 (46.9%)	68 (53.1%)
Age ($n = 128$)	11 years old	3 (2.3%)	4 (3.1%)
	12 years old	52 (40.6%)	58 (45.3%)
	13 years old	5 (3.9%)	6 (4.7%)
Ethnicity ($n = 126$)	Caucasian	48 (37.5%)	57 (44.5%)
	African-American	11 (8.6%)	9 (7.0%)
	Multi-racial	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Gender ($n = 128$)	Male	30 (23.4%)	38 (29.7%)
	Female	30 (23.4%)	30 (23.4%)

Instrumentation

Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale (SSIS-RS)

The researcher measured social skills rating of participants through the SSIS-RS. Students were also administered the SSIS-RS from Pearson Education. This rating scale will evaluate social skills, competing problem behaviors, and academic competency. For this current study, the researcher used only the measure of social skills. The seven different domains of social skills functioning include communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control. The questions include 40-items for Student Rating Scales that assess how the student feels in each social skill using a 4-point Likert scale (Not True (1), Little True (2), A Lot True (3), Very True (4)). The average response of the different items for each of the seven domains for social skills functioning were used to measure the dependent variable of social skills achievement. Each student completed the questionnaire individually in the classroom at the same time. The assessment took approximately 15-25 minutes. The researcher wrote this assessment at an approximate second-grade level for students. However, if any student requested assistance reading any question, the teacher read aloud to him/her. The researcher considered individuals who earned lower performance rating in a skill area in the SSIS-RS in need of direct and remedial instructional actions in social skills. Students with a higher rating in the SSIS-RS were functioning at a relatively high level of social skill for their grade.

The researcher obtained permission from the original author of the SSIS-RS to use this instrument for this proposed study (see Appendix D). Based on the analysis of Pearson Education, the test-retest reliability of the social skills scale is at 0.81 for students. Thus, it was determined to be reliable to measure the acquired social skills of students. According to

Gresham, Elliott, Vance, and Cook (2011), the internal consistency reliability investigation of the social skill measures involving adolescents aged 13 to 18 years showed acceptable reliabilities. These include acceptable internal consistency reliabilities on each of the seven social skill function domains of communication (0.86), cooperation (0.90), assertion (0.87), responsibility (0.90), empathy (0.91), engagement (0.89), and self-control (0.93); and the overall score for social skill function (0.97).

Procedures

The researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University to conduct the proposed study (see Appendix A). The researcher requested permission to conduct the study from the school principal. The researcher sent a letter of permission to them discussing the study details (see Appendix B). The researcher asked them to sign the letter of permission to provide proof that they gave permission to conduct the study (see Appendix C). The researcher obtained permission for students to participate from parents and students. The researcher used an informed consent form (see Appendix E) to ensure that participants agreed to participate in the study. The researcher considered only individuals who agreed to participate in the study as participants. The researcher obtained a signed copy of the informed consent form from the participants that agreed to participate in the study to show proof of their agreement. After obtaining permission to participate in the study from the IRB committee, the principal, teachers, parents, and students in the middle school, School System, the study began.

William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* included hundreds of stories for an instructive and inspiring anthology that will help children understand and develop character and help adults teach them. The different stories include a rich mine of moral literacy, a reliable moral reference

point that will help anchor children in the culture, history, and traditions that are the sources of the ideals by which people wish to live their lives. The stories include those in the Bible to American history, from Greek mythology to English poetry, and from fairy tales to modern fiction. It is a storybook for parents and children to enjoy together. The researcher chose the stories especially for a young audience to help parents introduce to their children the essentials of good character: courage, perseverance, responsibility, work, self-discipline, compassion, faith, honesty, loyalty, and friendship. The researcher created an eight-week lesson plan for this study in order for this study to be replicated and to be consistent in multiple classrooms of administering the treatment. The materials required for the study include the eight-week lesson plan including (Appendix F) the social skills instruction of stories from William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, student data collection sheets, and SSIS-RS (see Appendix H).

As soon as the researcher obtained permission, the researcher assessed students using the SSIS-RS to obtain the pre-test data. After getting the pre-test data, instruction began with stories from *The Book of Virtues*. Lessons took place weekly, at a minimum, and daily, at a maximum, for a period of 8 weeks. The researcher administered the SSIS-RS assessment for a maximum of 45 minutes. The researcher asked one teacher to teach and administer the assessments for each of the six classes. In total, there were two teachers, one handled the treatment groups and another one handled the control group. The researcher administered the pre-test to participants at the start of the first week of the 9-week period. At the end of the eight lessons, the researcher administered the SSIS-RS post assessment. The researcher collected data for social skill for the entire study period and shared with parents at the beginning and at the end of the study.

For the treatment group, children participated in whole group instruction, in which the teacher presented a story from *The Book of Virtues*. Students had an objective regarding the story, and vocabulary terms were discussed. One teacher for each class was responsible for

administering the assessments and teaching the stories from *The Book of Virtues*. The involvement of one teacher ensured that the manner of teaching and administering of assessments was similar for all participants. After reading the story, there was a brief classroom discussion regarding the social skill and/or character trait teachers taught. Throughout the week, students continued to discuss the skill.

For the treatment group, the researcher delivered an intervention weekly for eight weeks in the general education setting, Language Arts/Reading classes for all students. The social skills instruction took place at the time of the customary bell ringer, which is the first week of the 8-week period for intervention. Each lesson of the social skills instruction lasted approximately 5 to 10 minutes per day and included Common Core standards, not to take away from academic instructional time. The researcher reinforced lessons through teachable moments throughout each week of the 8-week intervention periods, with brief mini-lessons on the skills that teachers previously taught to reinforce as the need arose. The researcher did not provide the control group with any intervention. The students were exposed with the current curriculum of the schools.

In terms of data storage, electronic copies of the complete set of data was stored in a digital media storage and in the researcher's personal computer. The researcher locked printed copies in a drawer at the researcher's house or personal office. Storage of both electronic data and printed copies will be up to 3 years only. All data was only accessible by the researcher. The researcher will permanently delete the electronic files 3 years after the conclusion of the study. Paper copies of the survey responses will be paper shredded 3 years after the conclusion of the study.

Data Analysis

To assess the one research question posed in this study, ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether there exists significant differences in the measures of the dependent variables of reading achievement and social skills ratings between the control and the treatment group while controlling the effect of the covariate of pre-test social skills. Researchers use ANCOVA to compare the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous dependent variable while controlling the effect of a covariate in the relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). This test was chosen because the dependent variable is a continuous measurable variable, and the independent variable consists of at least two categorical independent groups, and at least one covariate. Because of the difference observed, the mean differences of the dependent variable with respect to two categorical groups of the independent variable are compared. The ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether the control and the treatment group differ in terms of the changes in the dependent variables of assessment scores of social skills ratings while controlling the effect of the pre-test social skills. The ANCOVA statistical analysis was considered a significance level of 0.05. There will be significant differences if the p -value is less than or equal to the level of significance value of 0.05.

The independent variable was the type of instruction received. The researcher coded individuals who participated in the social skills instruction as the treatment group, while the participants who did not take part in the social skills instruction were coded as the control group. The dependent variables were social skills as measured by the SSIS-RS. The covariate was pre-test social skills as measured by the SSIS-RS. The researcher used descriptive statistics to describe the participants as well as to summarize the scores of the assessment data gathered in

this study. The researcher summarized continuous measured study variables using central tendency measures of mean and standard deviation. The continuous measured study variables were scores of social skills.

Prior to the statistical analysis, the researcher conducted data screening. Respondents with many missing responses were removed from the data set. Outliers were determined using box-and-whisker plots for each group and then assumption testing was conducted. The first assumption test was normality testing on the data of the study variables using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Normality of the data set was a required assumption in a parametric statistical test. In addition, a Levene's test of homogeneity of variances since homogeneity of variances was conducted as a required assumption for ANCOVA analysis (Mustafa, 2011). The ANCOVA also required the assumption of linearity. The researcher ran a series of scatter plots between the pre-test variable and post-test variable for each group to test this assumption.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study is to determine if direct instruction in social skills using William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* has an impact upon academic achievement and social skill development. This was accomplished using a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design.

Chapter Four first reviews the criteria used for establishing and excluding outliers and extreme values used in this sample. Next, descriptive and frequency statistics of the SSIS-RS both pre- and post-control and experimental intervention are presented. Linearity and normality tests were performed to ensure that the data was appropriate for use in parametric tests, and ultimately resulted in an exponential transformation of the data. The results of the ANCOVA to address the research question are then presented and summarized.

Research Question

The research question for this study investigated whether or not there is a significant difference in social skills ratings, as measured by the SSIS-RS, of seventh-grade students who received social skills instructions via *The Book of Virtues* and those who did not receive instruction while controlling for the student's pre-test social skills. Specifically, the research question for this study was:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between average post-test SSIS-RS scores of seventh graders who participated in the social skill instruction and those who did not while controlling for the pre-tests?

Null Hypothesis

The following was the null hypothesis for the research question:

H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference between average post-test SSIS-RS scores of seventh graders who participated in the social skill instruction and those who did not while controlling for the pre-tests.

To address this research question, an ANCOVA was calculated with students' post-test SSIS-RS scores as the dependent variable, their group placement as the independent variable (control, experimental) and their pre-test SSIS-RS scores and a covariate. SSIS-RS scores are measured on a 1- to 4-point Likert scale ranging from "not true" to "very true."

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Population and Demographics

The sample consisted of 128 students from a rural middle school in West Georgia. In the experiment group, 66 students participated in the experiment group. There were 36 male participants and 30 female participants. In the control group, there were 58 participants with 33 males and 25 females participating.

Instrumentation and Descriptives

Of the 128 students with completed pre and post SSIS-RS data, four were excluded as univariate outliers using Tukey's (1977) hinges. Of the remaining 124, 15 participants were further excluded as bivariate outliers using Cook's D values (Cook, 1977). After the exclusion of outliers, 109 participants were in the sample; 58 (53.2%) were in the control group and 51 (46.8%) were in the experimental group.

With SSIS-RS responses ranging from one to four, with one being "not true" and four being "very true," the average student response for the pre-test was 3.17 with a standard

deviation of 0.47 and the average student response for the post-test group was 3.25 with a standard deviation of 0.42. The pre and post descriptive and frequencies by item are presented below. For the average pre-test and post-test score per item, view Tables 2 and 3. For the frequency statistics for each pre-test and post-test item, view Tables 4 and 5.

Table 2

Pre-Test Item Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I ask for information when I need it.	2.00	4.00	3.16	0.85
I pay attention when others present their ideas.	1.00	4.00	3.10	0.85
I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."	1.00	4.00	3.03	0.85
I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.	1.00	4.00	3.48	0.73
I stand up for others when they are not treated well.	1.00	4.00	3.35	0.79
I say "please" when I ask for things.	1.00	4.00	3.21	0.86
I feel bad when others are sad.	1.00	4.00	3.09	0.93
I get along with other children/adolescents.	1.00	4.00	3.14	0.84
I ignore others who act up in class	1.00	4.00	2.50	1.09
I take turns when I talk with others.	1.00	4.00	3.04	0.90
I show others how I feel	1.00	4.00	2.65	1.05
I do what the teacher asks me to do.	2.00	4.00	3.45	0.69
I try to make others feel better.	1.00	4.00	3.34	0.78
I do my part in a group.	1.00	4.00	3.45	0.73
I let people know when there's a problem.	1.00	4.00	3.10	0.94
I make friends easily.	1.00	4.00	3.24	0.92
I do my work without bothering others.	1.00	4.00	3.13	0.88
I am polite when I speak to others.	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.83
I stay calmed when I am teased.	1.00	4.00	2.62	1.14
I follow school rules.	2.00	4.00	3.39	0.77
I ask others to do things with me.	1.00	4.00	3.04	0.96
I am well behaved.	1.00	4.00	3.34	0.81
I say nice things about myself without bragging.	1.00	4.00	3.18	0.96
I stay calm when people point out my mistakes.	1.00	4.00	3.05	0.94
I try to think about how others feel.	1.00	4.00	3.15	0.90
I meet and greet new people on my own.	1.00	4.00	3.27	0.86
I do the right thing without being told.	2.00	4.00	3.20	0.74
I smile or wave at people when I see them.	1.00	4.00	3.15	0.95
I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.	1.00	4.00	3.02	0.97

I pay attention when the teacher talks to the class.	1.00	4.00	3.24	0.75
I play games with others.	1.00	4.00	3.31	0.87
I do my homework on time.	1.00	4.00	3.35	0.81
I tell others when I am not treated well.	1.00	4.00	2.70	1.06
I stay calm when dealing with problems.	1.00	4.00	2.94	0.94
I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.	1.00	4.00	3.34	0.84
I ask to join others when they are doing things that I like.	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.92
I keep my promises.	1.00	4.00	3.43	0.75
I say "thank you" when someone helps me.	1.00	4.00	3.56	0.75
I work well with my classmates.	1.00	4.00	3.21	0.88
I try to make new friends.	1.00	4.00	3.42	0.82
I tell people when I have made a mistake.	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.98
I ask for help when I need it.	1.00	4.00	3.22	0.88
I stay calm when I disagree with others.	1.00	4.00	3.02	1.02

1 = "Not true", 2 = "Little true", 3 = "A lot true", 4 = "Very True"

Table 3

Post-Test Item Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I ask for information when I need it.	2.00	4.00	3.19	0.81
I pay attention when others present their ideas.	1.00	4.00	3.10	0.79
I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."	1.00	4.00	3.27	0.92
I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.	1.00	4.00	3.48	0.88
I stand up for others when they are not treated well.	2.00	4.00	3.42	0.64
I say "please" when I ask for things.	1.00	4.00	2.97	0.98
I feel bad when others are sad.	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.88
I get along with other children/adolescents.	2.00	4.00	3.23	0.75
I ignore others who act up in class	1.00	4.00	2.75	1.12
I take turns when I talk with others.	1.00	4.00	3.29	0.87
I show others how I feel	1.00	4.00	2.76	0.99
I do what the teacher asks me to do.	2.00	4.00	3.43	0.75
I try to make others feel better.	1.00	4.00	3.27	0.80
I do my part in a group.	2.00	4.00	3.57	0.69
I let people know when there's a problem.	1.00	4.00	3.02	1.03
I make friends easily.	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.84
I do my work without bothering others.	1.00	4.00	3.17	0.91

I am polite when I speak to others.	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.77
I stay calmed when I am teased.	1.00	4.00	2.46	1.15
I follow school rules.	2.00	4.00	3.33	0.74
I ask others to do things with me.	1.00	4.00	3.07	1.03
I am well behaved.	1.00	4.00	3.17	0.81
I say nice things about myself without bragging.	1.00	4.00	3.37	0.69
I stay calm when people point out my mistakes.	1.00	4.00	3.28	0.84
I try to think about how others feel.	1.00	4.00	3.28	0.78
I meet and greet new people on my own.	1.00	4.00	3.38	0.86
I do the right thing without being told.	1.00	4.00	3.13	0.81
I smile or wave at people when I see them.	1.00	4.00	3.27	0.90
I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.	1.00	4.00	3.07	1.00
I pay attention when the teacher talks to the class.	1.00	4.00	3.32	0.86
I play games with others.	1.00	4.00	3.41	0.73
I do my homework on time.	1.00	4.00	3.19	0.90
I tell others when I am not treated well.	1.00	4.00	2.94	1.02
I stay calm when dealing with problems.	1.00	4.00	3.03	0.99
I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.	2.00	4.00	3.55	0.56
I ask to join others when they are doing things that I like.	1.00	4.00	3.36	0.79
I keep my promises.	2.00	4.00	3.68	0.50
I say "thank you" when someone helps me.	1.00	4.00	3.48	0.75
I work well with my classmates.	1.00	4.00	2.94	0.84
I try to make new friends.	1.00	4.00	3.47	0.73
I tell people when I have made a mistake.	1.00	4.00	2.98	0.95
I ask for help when I need it.	1.00	4.00	3.16	0.83
I stay calm when I disagree with others.	1.00	4.00	3.12	0.86

1 = "Not true", 2 = "Little true", 3 = "A lot true", 4 = "Very True"

Table 4

Pre-Test Item Frequency Statistics

	1	2	3	4
I ask for information when I need it.	0	36	32	56
I pay attention when others present their ideas.	4	27	46	47
I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."	5	28	49	42
I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.	2	11	36	75
I stand up for others when they are not treated well.	2	18	39	65
I say "please" when I ask for things.	3	26	37	58
I feel bad when others are sad.	7	27	38	52
I get along with other children/adolescents.	1	33	38	52
I ignore others who act up in class	26	41	26	31
I take turns when I talk with others.	7	26	46	45
I show others how I feel	20	38	32	34
I do what the teacher asks me to do.	0	14	40	70
I try to make others feel better.	3	15	43	63
I do my part in a group.	1	14	37	72
I let people know when there's a problem.	9	22	40	53
I make friends easily.	8	17	36	63
I do my work without bothering others.	4	29	38	53
I am polite when I speak to others.	1	28	36	59
I stay calmed when I am teased.	27	31	28	38
I follow school rules.	0	22	32	70
I ask others to do things with me.	10	24	41	49
I am well behaved.	3	17	39	65
I say nice things about myself without bragging.	9	21	33	61
I stay calm when people point out my mistakes.	10	22	44	48
I try to think about how others feel.	7	21	42	54
I meet and greet new people on my own.	4	21	36	63
I do the right thing without being told.	0	24	51	49
I smile or wave at people when I see them.	7	27	31	59
I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.	12	20	45	47
I pay attention when the teacher talks to the class.	1	20	51	52
I play games with others.	5	18	34	67
I do my homework on time.	2	20	34	68
I tell others when I am not treated well.	20	33	35	36
I stay calm when dealing with problems.	8	34	39	43
I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.	4	17	36	67

I ask to join others when they are doing things that I like.	5	26	28	65
I keep my promises.	1	16	36	71
I say "thank you" when someone helps me.	2	13	22	87
I work well with my classmates.	2	31	30	61
I try to make new friends.	2	20	26	76
I tell people when I have made a mistake.	12	23	42	47
I ask for help when I need it.	3	28	32	61
I stay calm when I disagree with others.	14	21	37	52

1 = "Not true", 2 = "Little true", 3 = "A lot true", 4 = "Very True"

Table 5

Post-Test Item Frequency Statistics

	1	2	3	4
I ask for information when I need it.	0	31	39	54
I pay attention when others present their ideas.	1	30	48	45
I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."	9	13	38	64
I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.	7	11	22	84
I stand up for others when they are not treated well.	0	10	52	62
I say "please" when I ask for things.	13	22	45	44
I feel bad when others are sad.	6	19	29	60
I get along with other children/adolescents.	0	24	48	52
I ignore others who act up in class	24	25	33	42
I take turns when I talk with others.	9	7	47	61
I show others how I feel	10	49	26	39
I do what the teacher asks me to do.	0	19	33	72
I try to make others feel better.	5	12	51	56
I do my part in a group.	0	14	25	85
I let people know when there's a problem.	17	13	44	50
I make friends easily.	4	21	42	57
I do my work without bothering others.	9	15	46	54
I am polite when I speak to others.	1	23	47	53
I stay calmed when I am teased.	31	40	18	35
I follow school rules.	0	20	43	61
I ask others to do things with me.	10	31	23	60
I am well behaved.	4	20	51	49
I say nice things about myself without bragging.	1	12	51	60

I stay calm when people point out my mistakes.	5	16	42	61
I try to think about how others feel.	3	16	48	57
I meet and greet new people on my own.	8	7	39	70
I do the right thing without being told.	4	21	54	45
I smile or wave at people when I see them.	5	23	29	67
I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.	11	24	34	55
I pay attention when the teacher talks to the class.	4	20	32	68
I play games with others.	2	12	43	67
I do my homework on time.	5	25	35	59
I tell others when I am not treated well.	18	14	49	43
I stay calm when dealing with problems.	8	34	28	54
I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.	0	4	48	72
I ask to join others when they are doing things that I like.	6	6	49	63
I keep my promises.	0	2	36	86
I say "thank you" when someone helps me.	5	4	42	73
I work well with my classmates.	4	35	49	36
I try to make new friends.	1	14	35	74
I tell people when I have made a mistake.	11	24	46	43
I ask for help when I need it.	5	19	51	49
I stay calm when I disagree with others.	3	30	40	51

1 = "Not true", 2 = "Little true", 3 = "A lot true", 4 = "Very True"

The SSIS-RS was used to assess seventh graders' social skills as both a pre-test and a post-test. A reliability analysis was conducted on pre-test and post-test responses to the 43-item scale. The Cronbach's coefficient for both the pre-test ($\alpha = .943$) and for the post-test ($\alpha = .938$) indicated a high internal consistency. Possible total scores ranged from 0 to 172, where higher values indicate stronger social skills. In Table 6 is the average, standard deviation, and range for the pre-test and post-test for the control and experimental group

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics For SSIS-RS Total Pre-Test And Post-Test Scores For The Control And Experimental Group

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Control (N = 58)	137.60	18.14	76	138.10	19.63	81
Treatment (N = 51)	135.06	22.00	81	141.12	16.60	71

Results

Data Screening

Data screening was conducted on both the treatment (social skill instruction) and control group (no social skill instruction) for the pre-test and post-test scores to check for data inconsistencies and outliers. Box and whisker plots were used to identify outliers for each group. After the initial screening for univariate outliers, Cook's (1977) D values for the ANCOVA model were calculated to screen for bivariate outliers. Participants with a Cook's D greater than the sample size n divided by four (.04), a standard criteria, were excluded.

Box-and-whisker plots of the distribution of scores after the exclusion of outliers are in Figure 1.

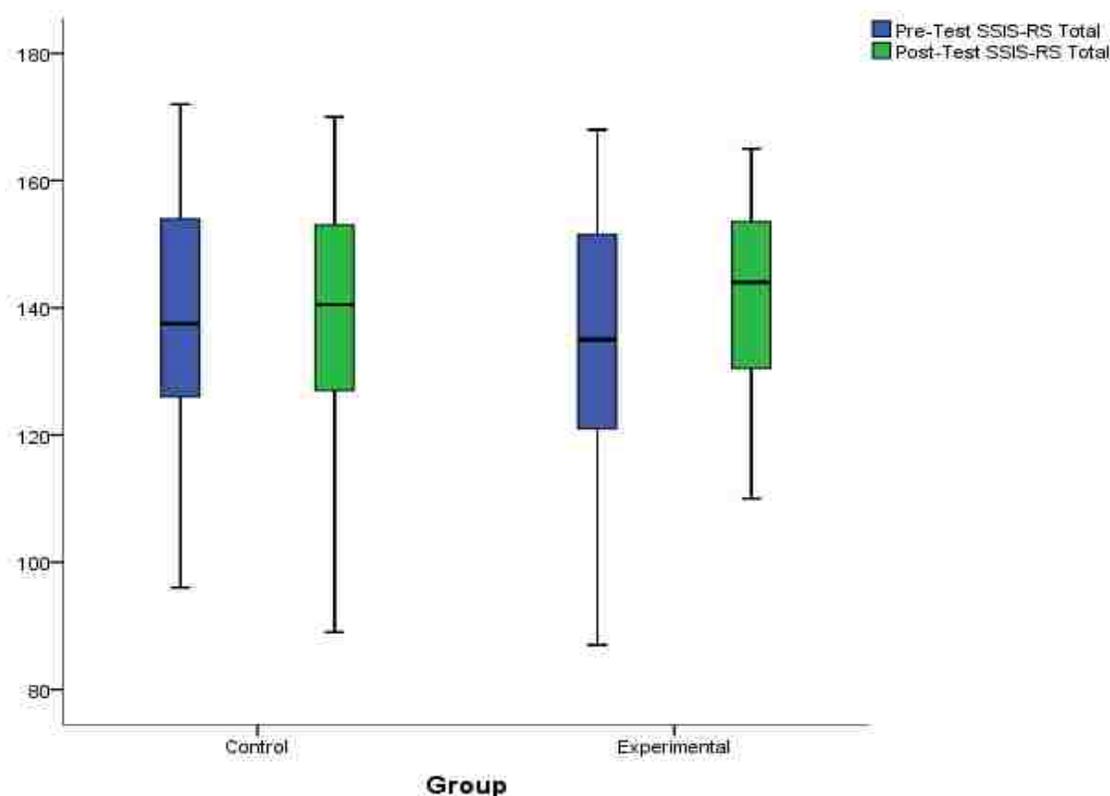


Figure 1. Boxplots of the SSIS-RS pre-test and post-test score totals.

Assumptions

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in social skills ratings, as measured by the SSIS-RS, of seventh-grade students who received social skills instructions via *The Book of Virtues* and those who did not receive instruction while controlling for the student's pre-test social skills. An ANCOVA requires the assumptions of normality, linearity, bivariate normal distribution, homogeneity of slopes and homogeneity of variance.

A series of Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests were conducted at each level of the independent variable to determine if the pre-test and post-test were normally distributed (see Table 7). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov was chosen to test for normality due to the large sample size ($n > 50$).

Table 7

Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests

		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test SSIS-RS Total	Control	.095	58	.200
	Experimental	.126	51	.043
Post-Test SSIS-RS Total	Control	.105	58	.179
	Experimental	.094	51	.200

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests were not significant ($p > .05$) for the post-test, and for the pre-test control group, indicating that scores did not deviate significantly from the normal distribution assumed for parametric tests. However, the pre-test group was not normally distributed in the experimental group, according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The decision was made to continue with using an ANCOVA despite this partial violation because (a) the sample size was large (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012), (b) according to criteria established by Bulmer (1979), the distribution for the variable was only moderately skewed (< 1 , < 0.5), and (c) particularly with equal sample sizes ANCOVAs are robust to moderate violations of the normality assumptions, as demonstrated in Monte Carlo studies (Edwards, 1993)

To assess bivariate normality, Q-Q plots for each continuous variable at each level of the independent variable were generated and examined for normality. Additionally, scatter plots for observed, predicted and residual values were generated for the ANCOVA to assess normality and linearity of error variances.

Next, scatter plots were generated for each group to ensure that the relationship between students' pre-test scores and post-test scores was linear (see Figures 2 and 3).

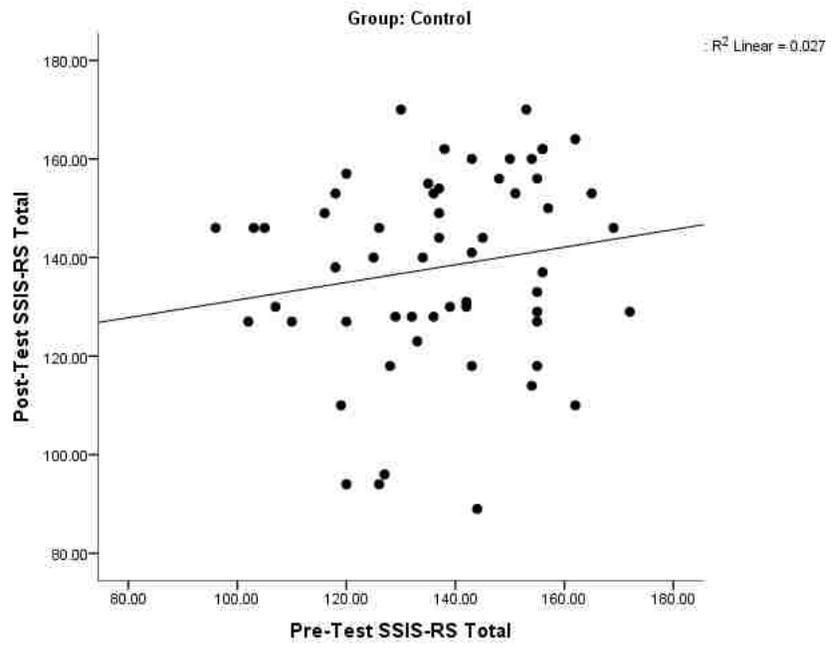


Figure 2. Scatter plot of pre-test and post-test SSIS-RS values for the control group.

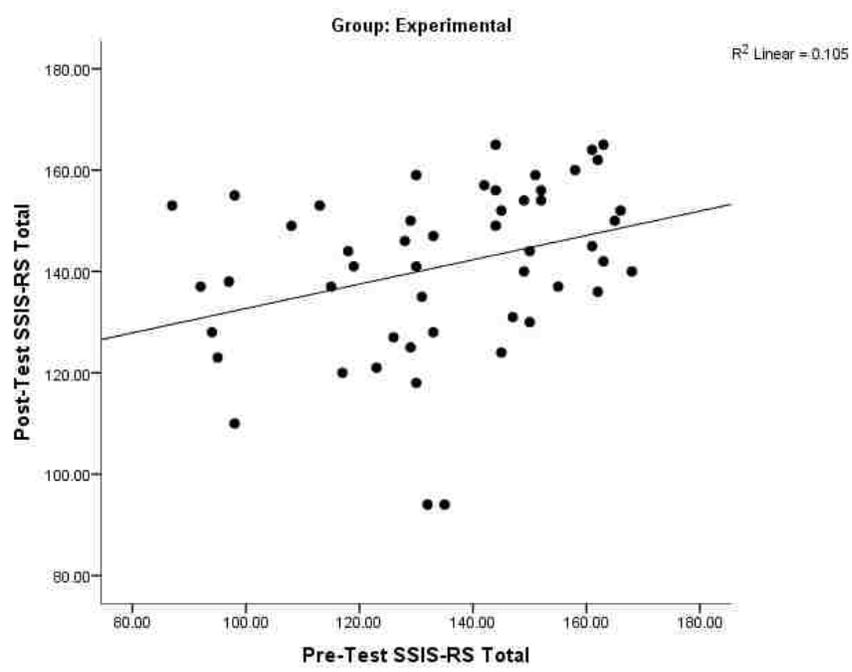


Figure 3. Scatter plot of pre-test and post-test SSIS-RS values for the experimental group.

To test the assumption of homogeneity of slopes, an interaction variable between the pre-test score and the condition variable was computed and included in the ANCOVA model. The interaction variable was non-significant ($F(1, 105) = 0.126, p = .723$), indicating that the relationship between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores was not significantly different at each level of the condition variable (control, experimental).

The homogeneity of variance assumption was tested by conducting a Levene's test for Equality of Error Variances. Results of the Levene's test were non-significant ($F(1, 107) = 3.22, p = .075$), indicating that variance was normally distributed and that the assumption for the homogeneity of variance was not violated.

Results for the Null Hypothesis

An ANCOVA was calculated to investigate the effect of receiving social instructions via *The Book of Virtues* on self-reported social skills of seventh graders as measured by the SSIS-RS. The independent variable was whether or not the student was in the control group or the experimental group, and students' pre-test SSIS-RS scores were included as a covariate. The dependent variable was the students' post-test SSIS-RS scores (see Table 8). The overall model was significant, $F(2,106) = 3.54, p = .033, \eta^2 = .063$.

The average post-test SSIS-RS total for students in the control group ($M = 138.10, SD = 19.63$) was not significantly different from the average post-test SSIS-RS total for students in the special skills instructions intervention group ($M = 141.12, SD = 16.60$), controlling for students' pre-test SSIS-RS total, $F(1,106) = 1.08, p = .302, \eta^2 = .010$. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 8

Results of ANCOVA Analysis

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	2253.513	2	1126.756	3.540	.033
Pre-test	2006.957	1	2006.957	6.305	.014
Group	342.244	1	342.244	1.075	.302
Error	33743.717	106	318.337		
Total	2157583.000	109			
Corrected Total	35997.229	108			

While the intervention variable was non-significant, the data trended in such a way that indicated the social skills instruction group did have a higher (though not statistically significant) average post-test SSIS-RS than the pre-test SSIS-RS (see Figure 4). This indicates that the intervention may have practical implications and warrants future research.

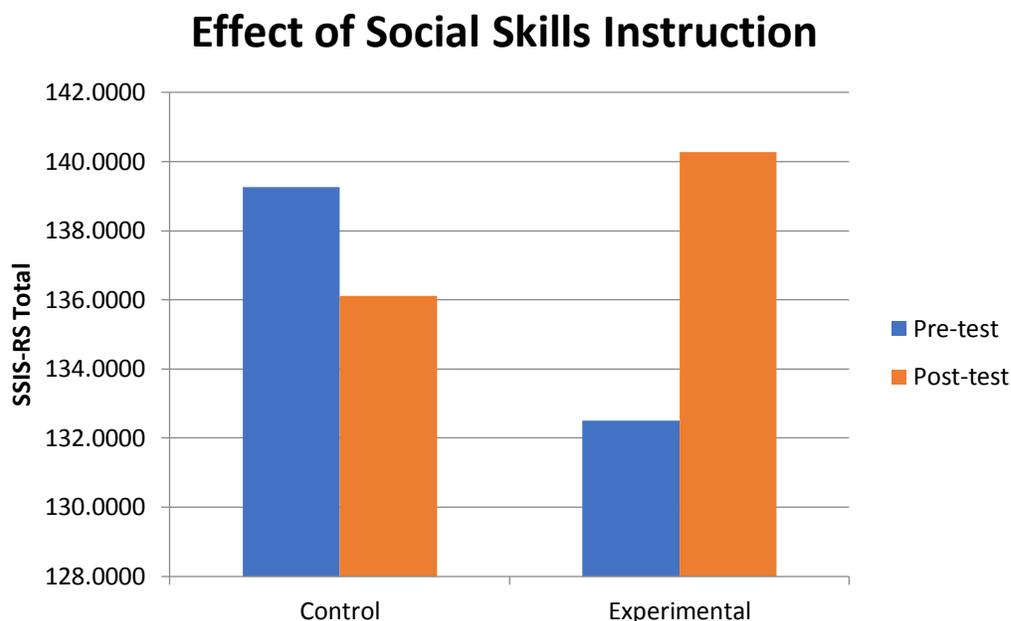


Figure 4. Average pre- and post- SSIS-RS for the control and experimental group (n.s).

Summary

An ANCOVA was calculated to investigate the effect of social skills instruction of social skills as measured by the SSIS-RS. Outliers were detected and excluded using criteria established by Tukey's hinges and Cook's D. Descriptives and frequencies for each item on the SSIS-RS were calculated, and the average and standard deviation for the SSIS-RS pre-test and post-test total were presented. The assumptions for the ANOCOVA were met, as indicated by the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. A visual inspection of scatter plots graphing the linear relationship between pre- and post-test SSIS-RS values indicated a linear relationship between our covariate and independent variable. Computing an interaction effect indicated that the homogeneity of regression assumption was met, and Q-Q and residual plots were inspected to ensure that the assumption of bivariate normality was met. While the results of the planned analyses were non-significant, the data did trend in the direction of the hypothesis. Further discussion of these findings and their implications continues in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter presents the summary of findings, implications, and recommendations based on the data analyzed in the previous chapter. Some limitations have also been identified, which future researchers building on the current study, can address. The study was able to uncover some insights as to how direct instruction in social skills, with the aid of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, shapes the social skills of seventh graders through a quantitative method.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if direct instruction in social skills with the aid of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* can shape seventh graders' social skill development. The researcher used a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design to achieve to this purpose, wherein 128 students from a small rural school district in West Georgia were invited to participate in completing the survey using the validated instrument of Social Skills Improvement Rating System. Of the 128 students with completed pre- and post- SSIS-RS data, four were excluded as univariate outliers using Tukey's (1977) hinges. Of the remaining 124, 15 participants were further excluded as bivariate outliers using Cook's (1977) D values. After the exclusion of outliers, 109 participants were in the sample, 58 (53.2%) were in the control group, and 51 (46.8%) were in the experimental group.

The ones in the experimental group underwent an intervention composed of instruction on social skills. Survey data from the two groups showed significant findings on the effects of the intervention on their social skills in comparison to those who did not undergo the intervention. In this study, the independent variable was the social instruction delivered through the *The Book of Virtues* while the dependent variable was the students' post-test SSIS-RS scores.

Results revealed that there was no significant difference between the average post-test SSIS-RS total for students in the control group and those in the intervention group, even if the students' pre-test SSIS-RS total was controlled for. Even though the overall model and intervention variables were not significant, the researcher found that the average pre-test SSIS-RS among those in the intervention group was lower than the average post-test SSIS-RS. In other words, the data trended in such a way that indicated the social skills instruction group did have a higher (but not statistically significant) average post-test SSIS-RS than the pre-test SSIS-RS. This is a positive indication that should still be recognized. No such difference was revealed among the control group students or those who received general education instruction instead of social instruction. This means that while the results of the planned analyses were non-significant, the data did trend in the direction of the hypothesis.

The most apparent observation of this study is that even though the direct instruction in social skills with the aid of Bennet's work entitled *The Book of Virtues* can improve seventh graders' social skills, this does not mean that their social skills are going to be more superior than the children who did not. The findings of the study, showing better post-test results than pre-test scores, does not discount the effectiveness of the usual methods in improving social skills. On average, both instructional methods can build social skills of students. However, the findings inadvertently confirmed that general education should be improved so that the social skills of the students can improve.

The findings were quite surprising because the researcher expected that the social skills of those students in the intervention group to be somewhat superior to those in the control group. However, the findings did show improvements in the scores of those who underwent the intervention of learning social skills through direct instruction using Bennet's work. The findings

can therefore still be taken as evidence that this kind of instruction can work if the desire is just to make sure students' verbal and non-verbal communication skills will improve. The more methods are available to improve seventh graders' verbal and non-verbal communication skills showing promise, the better. High school students with inadequate social skills can have a harder time in when they enter college as well as when they enter the workplace. The earlier these skills are developed, through methods that have sufficient evidence of their effectiveness, regardless if these methods can make them have better social skills than others, is necessary (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Social skill is a personal skill, and there is no need to be compared to others. It is already enough that students are given a chance to be part of an intervention designed to improve their self-esteem, self-concept, and self-awareness. All these improvements usually translate to increased academic achievement (Komarraju et al., 2013).

The two findings of the study are supported by theory. The findings that language arts class with targeted social skills instruction via stories could improve social skills but not necessarily that different from how general education helps students build social skills just showed that like what Bruner (1960) posited, learning is significantly dependent on the students. No matter how effective teachers are, especially in teaching content beyond the academics such as social skills, it is still up to the students whether they will have a successful learning experience.

According to Bruner (1960), knowledge cannot just be taught. All children have their meaning-making and knowledge acquisition processes. Teachers can only impart concepts and ideas, but it is still up to the students if knowledge will be accepted or used or if they can generate new knowledge. Students are completely able to become independent learners and critical thinkers if the teachers are good facilitators (Malik et al., 2013). The theory provided

that learning can only take place if there is a conductive structure, a spiral curriculum, and discovery learning (Bruner, 1960, 1967; Jiang & Perkins, 2013). The results indicated that this is also true in the aspects of non-cognitive skills or social skills. Social skills cannot just be taught. The instruction method cannot solely define a student's social skills or social interaction capacities.

On the other hand, it can also be said that Bruner's (1960) theory provided support for the use of direct instruction aided with Bennett's book. First, he claimed the value of the teaching structure, which this intervention provided the seventh-grade students. According to Bruner, instead of the traditional method of learning where instructors merely instruct and students are expected to learn and adhere to instructions, the teaching of structure, where a general picture is provided to the students with regard to the manner in which things relate to each other by the instructor can be much more effective. Students are given a chance to figure out or interpret relationships of certain things and put themselves and their experiences in the same contexts. The direct instruction in social skills with the aid of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* is one prime example of this, so it is not surprising to note some level of success regarding the post-test scores of the students. With this intervention, teachers are given a chance to help students become inductive thinkers by teaching using a structure (Jiang & Perkins, 2013). The findings showed that this holds true for non-cognitive skills such as social skills.

Second, Bruner (1960) advocated for a spiral curriculum where instructors visit and revisit instructional activities to engender independent learning. The use of *Book of Virtues*, which covers a whole gamut of stories to help children understand and develop character, enabled the teacher to revisit different kinds of past lessons on good character, courage, perseverance, responsibility, work, self-discipline, compassion, faith, honesty and loyalty, which

are all integral to effective social interactions. The different stories serve as a strong foundation for a social skills curriculum. Each lesson of the social skills instruction lasted up to ten minutes per day, and the researcher made sure to adhere to Common Core standards not to take away from academic instructional time. The researcher also reinforced lessons through teachable moments in the weekly sessions for 8 weeks, including some brief mini-lessons on the skills that teachers previously taught. This aligns with what Bruner said of a spiral curriculum.

Lastly, Bruner (1967) added that effective learning could happen if the concept of discovery learning is considered, which operates on the assumption that students utilize their current knowledge and experiences to generate their knowledge about and foster their relationships in the world. Based on this assumption, Bruner (1967) contended that students would be more likely to retain and make use of knowledge if they have come to know about facts on their own. Under the present intervention evaluated, these elements were incorporated, so its success finds support in Bruner's theory. It can be recalled that in each session the children in the group participated, they were presented with a story from the reference book or *The Book of Virtues*. Students are presented with the story, they read or listened as it was read aloud, and then reviewed the vocabulary terms. After reading the story, only a brief classroom discussion was carried out about the social skill and character trait. The discussion of the said skills took place the whole week. However, students are given the freedom to interpret the skills and stories using their own experiences. Reading can be a very subjective process, and the researcher respected this by not telling how the students should understand the story but just facilitating the process by telling them the objectives to achieve and the skills that the researcher wanted them to learn.

Also, according to Bruner, this is necessary as well because students in America are diverse, coming from different family and cultural backgrounds. How they understand stories and relationships about the world differ according to their backgrounds. Even though the researcher did not differentiate the students according to their ethnicity or other demographic variables, most of the students who participated, whether for control or treatment group, were Caucasians. This may explain why there were no significant differences between the results of the treatment and control group. Had the participants been of different backgrounds, the effectiveness of the direct instruction of social skills using Bennett's book may have been more highlighted.

Apart from support from the theory, the findings are supported in some literature as well. The findings of the study are supported by literature on metacognitive strategies and their effectiveness. Based on the literature, metacognitive strategies where individuals are encouraged to develop and utilize their thinking process can be effective in learning about something and increasing one's self-regulation competence. Social skills are unlike academic skills. These skills necessitate having high levels of self-regulation. The methods employed in traditional general education curriculum may not be that effective in fostering social skills as opposed to the metacognitive strategies (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). This is because metacognitive strategies necessitate higher-order thinking about a student's thinking process, wherein his or her understanding of his or her strengths and weaknesses is encouraged. In these strategies, those students who end up becoming successful are those who are encouraged to be highly aware of when they are performing their best and make use of strategies to enable that. In these strategies, self-reflection is critical (Uchino et al., 2015). With the current intervention, self-reflection is facilitated. Finding out that it was able to increase the scores of the participating students are

therefore aligned with what metacognitive strategy literature is saying. According to Pellas (20014), in situations where students need independent learning for achievement, metacognitive self-regulation is crucial. Montroy et al. (2014) also proved their hypothesis that higher rates of self-regulation would lead to better social skills and reduce problem behaviors true. In their analysis involving structural equation modeling, the researchers found that a child's social skills and problem behaviors can be developed if they have sufficient levels of behavioral self-regulation (Montroy et al., 2014).

It is apparent that support from literature and theories, while existing, is thin. This is because there was not much done on how to teach social skills in the past. This study was designed to close that literature gap in the first place. Instead, studies within the social skills literature focused instead on the value of social skills for academic achievement and beyond. The current study showed one way for improving social skills of seventh-grade students.

The current study was carried out in recognition of how important social skills are in the classroom and beyond. Having the ability to have and maintain positive interactions with other people is described as a life skill, because of a lot of things, within and beyond academics, hinges on this ability (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Without the proper social skills, a person will have difficulties developing good communication skills, have problems with being empathic, and have challenging experiences of relating with others and making friends. While being social for certain people comes naturally, others do not have this luck. Even though there are ways to circumvent social skill issues, it is not a skill that can be completely rejected as important (Gutman & Schoon, 2013; Muller et al., 2014). Although social skills are shaped by multiple factors, these skills can be partially learned in school, where most individuals have spent most of their years in a lifetime. This is why schools have the great responsibility of equipping their

students with social skills as well, at the same time they are equipping the students with academic and technical knowledge. Non-cognitive skills are as important as cognitive skills to be successful and well-rounded and ultimately achieve positive life outcomes.

In recognition of all these and the dearth of literature evaluating how social skills can be improved not through general education, the current study was designed to determine if a direct instruction of social skills with the aid of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* can shape seventh graders' social skill development. Results of the study were insightful. Findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the average post-test SSIS-RS total for students in the control group and those in the intervention group.

These unexpected findings even held true when pre-test SSIS-RS total was controlled for. Still, the researcher did find that the average pre-test SSIS-RS among those in the intervention group was lower than the average post-test SSIS-RS. This was not observed among students in the control group, which ultimately meant that direct instruction of social skills with the aid of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues* can be an effective method. Based on the theory underpinning this study, Bruner (1960) posited that learning could only take place if there is a conducive structure, a spiral curriculum, and discovery learning and it was apparent that the intervention used in this study satisfied all three elements.

Even if the findings cannot be immediately generalized to all schools, schools can take these findings as a starting point to consider direct instruction as a method of equipping and improving students' social skills. Schools and teachers can use findings to feel encouraged in being more innovative in their methods, as long as they allow students to be both guided and independent in their practice of their social skills. Not everything can just be taught in the

traditional way of instruction where teachers teach, and students just do, especially not something as complicated and dynamic as social skills.

Implications

The current study shows that the lack of social skills is not only a problem for students with autism, which the majority of past literature seems to be saying. The current study provided one way to address the social skills problems of students, especially in the seventh grade. The current study showed that direct instruction could be effective in building and improving social skills. Even though the findings did not reveal any significant difference from the average results gathered from those who were taught using general education, comparing of pre- and post-test scores revealed that direct instruction, wherein children reflect and learn through stories, can certainly make a difference. The findings, therefore, can be of value to the education field, the community, and the government. Although the findings cannot be immediately generalized to all schools, schools can take these findings as a starting point to consider direct instruction in improving social skills. Schools can take these findings to encourage their teachers and resource teachers from being more innovative in their methods and to avoid a drop in the bucket method to teaching diverse students with different learning styles and backgrounds.

The current findings also showed that teachers could only do so much to improve the social skills of students. Parents and communities are also necessary. Students' experiences outside of the classroom, as shown in the current study, can affect they gauge reading materials and how they accept what is taught in the classroom. That said, parents and communities should continue to provide the social support that students need as teachers strive to instill in them the social skills they need to be functional adults one day. For instance, Muller et al. (2014), in their study, revealed the strong relationship between social skills and social support. Their data from

16-year-old individuals have social skills, including their dimensions of expressivity, sensitivity, and control, were found to be positively correlated with social support and quality of life. Their results also indicated that social skills were negatively correlated with depressive symptoms (Müller et al., 2014). If social skills improvement will rely merely on the activities within the classroom, these social skills learned or acquired will not be for the long term and would not become natural to the students.

It must be noted that even though the findings showed a favorable increase in the social skills of the students, this does not mean that social skills can be acquired overnight or through several sessions, or the use of just one book containing several stories. For typical students, social skills are learned over time with repeated practice. There is a need for educators to ensure skills taught are becoming part of the child's repertoire after instruction has ended. However, the current researcher no longer evaluated this as that was beyond the scope of the study.

Overall, the findings of the study led to several recommendations, as listed below:

(a) Teachers must look for more books similar to the one Bennett wrote, composed of different stories that can make students reflect on relationships and the value of interactions. Teachers can look for materials that can generate information about the social skills necessary within the schools in different school circumstances and contexts that students encounter daily.

(b) Teachers can look for materials that they can consult to teach students skills they can apply in different school settings, even beyond their grade level and the current school.

(c) Regardless of whether general education or direct instruction method, it is recommended that teachers follow an instructional format that incorporates the following stages.

(1) First, identifying the social skill necessary to be taught because there are multiple social skills, not just communicating or relating to others.

(2) Second, explaining the value of the social skills and persuading the students to see its importance.

(3) Third, modeling the skills through examples and stories, whether using one or multiple materials.

(4) Fourth, allowing for guided practice so that the teacher can still check if the students are recognizing the value of the skills being taught.

(5) Fifth, allowing for opportunities for independent practice after the former guided practice.

(6) Sixth, continuing to monitor student progress.

(7) Lastly, partnering with families and communities to provide the social support needed by the youth to have positive social skills.

It is very important to note that social skills, like other kinds of skills whether cognitive or non-cognitive, are not going to be acquired in a few sessions, or even if they are acquired in a short span, there is no guarantee that the skills will last. It is important for teachers to help students see the value of the skills themselves so that they can embrace them thoroughly.

Limitations

The study produced interesting and significant findings of using direct instruction with the aid of Bennett's book, but there were limitations in the study, mainly because of the methods, instrument, and sample used. For one, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. The sample used was only adolescents enrolled in grade seven from a small, rural school district in West Georgia. A total of 160 students were targeted out of the 500 students of the whole school; in the end, 128 students participated in the study. The findings were derived from only one grade so these cannot be applied to other grade levels. Other studies often used Grades 7 and 8

for their sample because these are the crucial grade levels, but for the current study, only Grade 7 was focused on.

The school has an ethnic make-up of 84% Caucasian, 15% African-American, and 1% multi-racial, so the majority of the participants were also Caucasians. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all ethnic groups of students. The research could have produced different findings if the researcher consciously evaluated whether race or ethnicity had an effect on their social skills at the baseline and the end of the intervention. With regard to the sample, the researcher also used pre-assigned classes to categorize under treatment and control group. The findings could be different if the students were first tested to see where they should be (i.e., whether their social skills needed intervention, whether they were willing to be under the treatment group instead of the control group and vice versa, whether they perceived their social skills are lacking not). Even though all the participants willingly participated in the study, so none of them were inherently unwilling, it would have been better if they were categorized based on their social skills. Sometimes, the beliefs over one's skills can affect how one can improve. Those who do not believe they need to improve, tend not to improve because of some barriers, such as their thoughts and confidence levels.

Another set of limitations is linked to the use of quasi-experimental design. It was deemed the most appropriate because it would allow the assessment of a direct relationship between two variables (Gall et al., 2007), something that other methods, especially qualitative research methods, would not allow the researcher to do effectively. About this, the researcher completely based the findings and the associated conclusions made about the ability of direct instruction to increase social skills on the test scores. This is where one of the limitations comes in. Because the findings only relied on test scores, the researcher could not understand what the

students felt about the whole treatment or direct instruction. Their perceptions about how their social skills improved could have been important to note because if they were not happy and believed that they could not subsequently use the skills they learned in the future, then the test scores could be undermined, even if they show improvements. A qualitative research design, whether to be carried out by interviews or focus group discussions of a certain sample size of students, might also enable the researcher to understand what can be improved on with regard to direct instruction. Since one argument is that direct instruction using Bennett's work enabled students to reflect on stories and through this, experienced improvements in their social skills, it would have been interesting to note what these reflections were and how they specifically did for the students to make them improve their social skills.

Although findings based on the test scores showed that social skills improved for those in the treatment group and that on average, there were no significant differences between the social skills of students in the control and treatment groups, the researcher cannot know for sure if the improvements were solely because of the intervention.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers can address the limitations of the current study as well as take on completely different angles but build on the current findings. Future researchers can evaluate a school where the student population is more varied regarding socioeconomic status, gender, and race. Socioeconomic status can affect students' social skills (Deckers, 2015). Empirical evidence had it that socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of many facets of a child's personality and social skills. Children from low socioeconomic status tend to be less altruistic and less friendly (Decker, 2015). Future researchers can control for the variables of family household income, parents' education level, and overall socioeconomic status. Gender could

also be a factor. If future researchers replicate the current study but also note gender disparities, then they can show whether social skills of boys improve better than girls or vice versa. Gender can affect personality and social skills as well (Decker, 2015). Some provided evidence that girls can be more social than boys in general and at the same time more reflective. If this is the case, then the direct instruction using Bennett's work can have different results for boys and girls. The same goes for race. Because the current study's participants, whether those in the treatment or those in the control group, are composed mostly of Caucasian students, racial disparities cannot be detected. Certain students from specific racial groups have social skill deficiencies for reasons Caucasian students cannot relate to. If their social skills need to be improved not because they are shy or having difficulties communicating, but because of their racial disposition and uneasiness with the majority culture, then direct instruction might affect them differently. Future researchers can evaluate if these assumptions are true.

The current researcher might have compared the pre-test and post-test results of the students with regard to their social skills, but no steps were undertaken to note which students have problematic social skills. Some students in the treatment group could have fine social skills in the first place so the treatment did not affect them that much, or as much as it would have been if all the participants have social skill deficiencies. The same goes for the control group. If some of the students who were in the control group have social skill deficiencies while others do not, how general education influenced them may differ. Some would simply have higher scores on the survey, regardless of the treatment they received or did not receive. Future researchers can also evaluate if these assumptions are true.

A qualitative method would also provide some insights as to whether the students would use these skills in the future or let current problems with social skills take over once more.

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Appendix A: Approval Letter from IRB at Liberty University**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 20, 2017

Donna Smith

IRB Approval 2984.092017: The Effect of Social Skills Instruction on 7th Grade Students
Taking a Language Arts Class

Dear Donna Smith,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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UNIVERSITY.
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Appendix B: Request Letter of Permission for Research

On Wednesday, November 2, 2016, Smith, Donna Payne <dpsmith3@liberty.edu> wrote:
November 2, 2016

Dear Sir:

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Doctoral Degree in Teaching and Learning. The title of my research project is “The Effect of Social Skills instruction on 7th grade student ” with the purpose of determining the impact of social skills instruction upon academic achievement without adding to or interfering with academic curriculum.

If granted permission to conduct this study, I will work with the teachers involved to have them assign students involved a code number, as well as code their scores and survey information obtained. This will insure the anonymity of each student.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at your school, and to utilize student test data. The school, teachers, and as previously stated, the students will remain anonymous. Please indicate your permission through letter of acceptance. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Donna P. Smith
Liberty University

Appendix C: Signed Letter of Permission from School

From: Hadley, Brian <brian.hadley@heard.k12.ga.us>

Sent: Thursday, November 3, 2016 11:47:05 AM

To: Smith, Donna Payne

Subject: Re: Permission for Research

I grant you permission to conduct your research at this particular school and to utilize student test data that will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Appendix D: Permission to Use Social Skills Improvement Rating Scale System

bill.schryver@pearson.com on behalf of
Licensing, - <pas.licensing@pearson.com>

Reply all |

Fri 11/18/2016, 3:43 PM
Smith, Donna Payne
Dear Ms Smith,

Permission to use a Pearson assessment is inherent in the qualified purchase of the test materials in sufficient quantity to meet your research goals. In any event, Pearson has no objection to you using the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS™) and **you may take this email response as formal permission from Pearson to use the test in its as-published formats in your student research.**

If you do not yet meet the purchase qualifications, your professor or faculty supervisor may assist you by lending their qualifications.

Your source to qualify for (qualification level "B") and purchase the SSIS test materials you need is our Pearson Assessment online catalog). Please visit the following link to the product page: <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/education/products/100000322/social-skills-improvementsystem-ssis-rating-scales.html?origsearchtext=100000322>

Finally, because of test security concerns, permission is not granted for appending tests to theses, dissertations, or reports of any kind. You may not include any actual assessment test items, discussion of any actual test items or inclusion of the actual assessment product in the body or appendix of your dissertation or thesis. You are only permitted to describe the test, its function and how it is administered and discuss the fact that you used the Test; your analysis, summary statistics, and the results.

Regards,

William H. Schryver
Senior Legal Licensing Specialist

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
9/20/2017 to 9/19/2018
Protocol # 2984.092017

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION ON 7TH GRADE STUDENTS TAKING A LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS

Donna P. Smith
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child/student is invited to be in a research study of the impact of social skills upon reading achievement. He or she was selected as a possible participant because he or she is a seventh grade student at HMS. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him or her to be in the study.

Donna P. Smith, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine if building relationships through character education stories has an impact upon social skills.

Procedures: If you agree to allow your child/student to be in this study, I would ask him or her to do the following things:

1. All students will answer anonymous questions in the form of a pre-assessment and a post assessment (approximately 8 weeks later). These assessments include 40-items for Student Rating Scales that assess how the student feels about each social skill using a 4-point Likert scale (Not True, A Little True, A Lot True, Very True). This activity will take approximately 25 minutes.
2. Students in the research group will participate in classroom story time/lessons, which relate to academic standards. These stories will take place daily for 8 weeks.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which are no more than students would encounter in everyday life. The potential benefits to students in the research group include improved social skills. Students in the control group should not expect to receive a direct benefit.

Compensation: Your child will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Students will be assigned a number by the classroom teacher. That number will be used to ensure that all identifying information is kept secure. Students will only use the number assigned to identify their surveys. The list will remain with the student's teacher in a locked file cabinet within the classroom. The surveys collected will remain with the researcher.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
9/20/2017 to 9/19/2018
Protocol # 2984.092017

- All data will be kept in a locked file in the office of the researcher for a period of three years. At that point all information will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child/student to participate will not affect his or her current or future relations with Liberty University or Heard County Middle School. If you decide to allow your child/student to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If your child chooses to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, data collected from him/her will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Donna P. Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (404) 290-6014 or at dpsmith3@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Paul Tapper, at patapper@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
9/20/2017 to 9/19/2018
Protocol # 2984.092017

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I DO NOT consent to allow my child/student to participate in the study.

Please sign and return this sheet only if you do not wish for your child to participate in the surveys.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F: Eight-Week Lesson Plan

Appendix F: Eight-Week Lesson Plan

Social Skills Lesson Plans

Week	Topic
1	Self-Discipline
2	Compassion
3	Responsibility
4	Friendship
5	Work
6	Courage
7	Perseverance
8	Honesty

Week 1 Self-Discipline

Teach	<p>Day 1 Write the term "Self-Discipline" on the board. Have students write what they think self-discipline means on paper. Discuss their definitions Define Self-discipline as "In self-discipline one makes a disciple of oneself. One is one's own teacher, trainer, coach, and disciplinarian... There is much unhappiness and personal distress in the world because of failures to control tempers, appetites, passions, and impulses. Oh, if only I had stopped myself is an all too familiar refrain. (Bennett, p. 22)</p> <p>Day 2 Read the story "The King and His Hawk" (Bennett, p. 37-39) Discuss the story and make a Venn Diagram on paper to compare what the king did to what the king should have done.</p> <p>Day 3 Read the story "My Own Self" (Bennett p. 30-32) Discuss the story and make a Venn Diagram to tell what the little boy did and what he should have done.</p> <p>Day 4 Read the story "Please" (Bennett p. 24-25) Discuss the story and list other skills that could be taught the same way.</p> <p>Day 5 Have students complete a "Responsibility Chart" to indicate ways that they can become responsible for their own self-discipline.</p>
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My Responsibilities Chart

Complete the following chart. Indicate your responsibilities, whether they occur at home, school, or in the community. Think about your actions this past week. What do you need to work on to better your response to your responsibilities?

My Responsibilities	Home, School or Community	My Actions	What do I need to work on?

Social Skills Lesson Plans

Name _____ Grade Level _____ Dates _____ Compassion: Week 2

Topic	Compassion
Teach	<p>Day 1</p> <p>Write the term "Compassion" on the board. Have students write what they think self-discipline means on paper. Discuss their definitions Define Compassion as "A virtue that takes seriously the reality of other persons; their inner lives, their emotions, as well as their external circumstances. It is an active disposition toward fellowship and sharing, toward supportive companionship in distress or in woe."</p> <p>Day 2</p> <p>Read the poem, "The Sin of Omission" (Bennett, p. 138) Discuss the story and make a list on paper to explain what should have been done.</p> <p>Day 3</p> <p>Read the story "The Gift of the Magi (Bennett p. 166-170) Discuss the story and make a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the actions of Jim and Della.</p> <p>Day 4</p> <p>Read the story "Diamonds and Toads" (Bennett p. 112-114) Discuss the story and compare and contrast the actions of the two sisters.</p> <p>Day 5</p> <p>Have students complete a "List of Good Deeds" to indicate ways that they can become more compassionate and show that they care for others.</p>

Week 3 Responsibility

Teach	<p>Day 1</p> <p>Write the term "Responsibility" on the board. Have students write what they think responsibility means on paper. Discuss their definitions Define Responsibility as "To 'respond' is to 'answer.' Correspondingly, to be 'responsible' is to be 'answerable,' to be accountable. Irresponsible behavior is immature behavior is immature behavior. Taking responsibility – being responsible- is a sign maturity." (Bennett, p. 185)</p> <p>Day 2</p> <p>Read the story "For Want of a Horseshoe Nail" (Bennett, p. 198). Discuss the story and make a flow chart to illustrate all that was lost.</p> <p>Day 3</p> <p>Read the poem "The Boy We Want" (Bennett p. 196) Discuss the story and make want ad for the boy.</p> <p>Day 4</p> <p>Read the story "Icarus and Daedalus" (Bennett p. 211-213) Discuss the story and write a couple paragraphs explaining why it is important to do as you are told.</p> <p>Day 5</p> <p>Have students re-visit the "Responsibility Chart" to indicate ways that they can become responsible for their own self-discipline and to add way that they can become responsible.</p>
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Week 4 Friendship

Teach	<p>Day 1 Write the term "Friendship" on the board. Have students write what they think friendship means on paper. Discuss their definitions Define Friendship as "Friendships usually rise out of mutual interest and common aims, and these pursuits are strengthened by the benevolent impulses that sooner or later grow. The demands of friendship-- for frankness, for self-revelation, for taking friends' criticisms as seriously as their expression of admiration or praise, for stand-by-me loyalty, and for assistance to the point of self-sacrifice—are all potent encouragements to moral maturation and even ennoblement. (Bennett, p. 269).</p> <p>Day 2 Read the poem, "Cat and Mouse in Partnership" (Bennett, p. 272). Discuss the story and write a detailed paragraph to explain how you think the mouse would feel after discovering that he had been deceived.</p> <p>Day 3 Read the story "The Velveteen Rabbit (Bennett p. 275-283) Discuss the story and make a Timeline to explain the life of the Rabbit.</p> <p>Day 4 Read the story "Keep Friendships in Constant Repair" (Bennett p. 329). Discuss the story and reflect upon old friends and new friends. Make a list of old friends, determine if you would like to make them new again.</p> <p>Day 5 Have students complete a "Qualities of Great Friendships" list to indicate the qualities that are important to them. Have students rank their list in importance to them. Then have students circle the qualities that they think they do well with and put a star beside the qualities that they need to work on.</p>
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Work: Week 5

Topic	<p>Work Teach Day 1 Write the term "Work" on the board. Have students write what they think work means on paper. Discuss their definitions. Define WORK as "Work is applied effort; it is whatever we put ourselves into, whatever we expend our energy on for the sake of accomplishing or achieving something. Work in fundamental sense is not what we do for a living, but what we do with our living" (Bennett, p. 347)</p> <p>Day 2 Read the story "The Little Red Hen" (Bennett, p. 352) and "Five Little Chickens" (Bennett, p. 353). Discuss the story and put yourself in the Hen's place. Would you have done the same thing? Compare the actions of both Hens. Do you agree with their actions?</p> <p>Day 3 Read the story "The Shoemaker and The Elves" (Bennett p. 370-372) Discuss the story and draw a picture to show how the shoemaker felt when he learned what the elves had done for him.</p> <p>Day 4 Read the story "How the Camel Got His Hump" (Bennett p. 373-376). Discuss the story and talk about the importance of doing work.</p> <p>Day 5 Students should write how to be a better worker. Make a list of traits that help you to be a better worker. Which of these traits would you need to improve upon?</p>
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Courage: Week 6

Topic	Courage
Teach	<p>Day 1 Write the term "Courage" on the board. Have students write what they think courage means on paper. Discuss their definitions Define Courage: as "by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them" (Bennett, p. 442).</p> <p>Day 2 Read the poem, "If--" (Bennett, p. 476-477) Discuss the story and make a list of actions that the poem states will help you grow up well. Put a star by the actions that you need to work on.</p> <p>Day 3 Read the story "Chicken Little" (Bennett p. 443-444). Discuss the story and tell how Chicken Little was being courageous.</p> <p>Day 4 Read the poem "The Road Not Taken" (Bennett p. 523) Discuss the story and compare and contrast the two roads: Which road would you choose? Why?</p> <p>Day 5 Have students complete the worksheet, "Choosing Courage."</p>

Perseverance: Week7

Teach	<p>Day 1 Write the term "Perseverance" on the board. Have students write what they think perseverance means on paper. Discuss their definitions. Define Perseverance as, "Perseverance is an essential quality of character in high level leadership. Much good that might have been achieved in the world is lost through hesitation, faltering, wavering, vacillating, or just not sticking with it. (Bennett, p. 527).</p> <p>Day 2 Read the story "The Tortoise and the Hare" (Bennett, p. 529-530) Discuss the story, making sure to point out that the tortoise was much slower than the hare; however, because the tortoise kept going, he won the race. Have student write about a time when something was hard... how did they accomplish their goal? What was the end result?</p> <p>Day 3 Read the story "The Little Steam Engine" (Bennett p. 530-532). Discuss the story. Make sure to point out that the Little Engine's thoughts "affirmations" made all the difference in being able to climb the hill. Have students create a list of affirmations that they can use to encourage themselves.</p> <p>Day 4 Read the story "I have a Dream" (Bennett p. 572-576). Discuss the story make sure to point out that Martin Luther's dream is being lived today. That people of color are afforded equal opportunities.</p> <p>Day 5 Have students complete "Procrastination Elimination" to indicate ways that they can break a task into much simpler steps to persevere and accomplish their goal.</p>
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Procrastination Elimination

Your job is to eliminate procrastination, or the act of putting off tasks that you need to do, especially the things that you had rather not do in the first place. In order to eliminate procrastination and persevere to accomplish every task at hand, you will use this handy sheet to break each task into manageable parts.

Task	Steps	Completed

Honesty: Week 8

Topic	Honesty
Teach	<p>Day 1</p> <p>Write the term "Honesty" on the board.</p> <p>Have students write what they think self-discipline means on paper.</p> <p>Discuss their definitions.</p> <p>Define Honesty as, "To be honest is to be real, genuine, authentic, and bona fide. To be dishonest is to be partly feigned, forged, fake, or fictitious. Honesty expresses both self-respect and respect for others; fully respects neither oneself nor others. Honesty imbues (inspires with a feeling of quality), lives with openness, reliability, and candor; it expresses a disposition to live in the light. Dishonesty seeks shade, cover, or concealment. It is a disposition to live partly in the dark." (Bennett, p. 599). Day 2</p> <p>Read the story, "George Washington and the Cherry Tree" (Bennett, p. 605) Discuss the story and make a list on paper to explain why "the truth is more important than a whole orchard of the finest cherry trees" (Bennett, p. 606). Day 3</p> <p>Read the story "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" (Bennett p. 602) Discuss the story and write a paragraph or two to explain why it is necessary to always tell the truth. Day 4</p> <p>Read the story "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" (Bennett p. 637)</p> <p>Discuss the story and compare and contrast the actions of the City Council and of the Pied Piper. Who was honest? Who did the right thing?</p> <p>Day 5</p> <p>Have students Create a comic strip with 9 or more scenes to portray a conversation which includes honesty of two or more parties. Alternate assignment: Have students write dialogue to include a conversation of honesty between two or more parties.</p>