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Student interpersonal skill instruction and self-esteem.

Celeste L. O'Neil Tremblay

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STUDENT INTERPERSONAL SKILL
INSTRUCTION AND SELF-ESTEEM

by

Celeste L. Tremblay O'Neil

A Research Thesis
Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
2000
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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother, Nancy Cottel.
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine whether a ten-session program that teaches interpersonal skills to grade four, five and six students would increase student self-esteem and interpersonal skills. A total of 285 children from two public elementary schools were divided into one school as the experimental group and one school as the control group. Before and after the experimental manipulation, all children completed the Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory, Interpersonal Skills Inventory, and How I Feel About Others In My Class survey. The experimental group received the program "Helping Kids Find Their Strengths". Themes of the program included identifying one's strengths and helping others to realize their strengths, looking at good experiences and using those experiences to make better choices and effective listening and communication skills. Control group students received regular classroom curriculum. Results indicated that the self-esteem and interpersonal skills of the students in the experimental and control groups were not significantly different.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. General Statement of the Problem

The junior level (Grade 4-6) of elementary school is an important time frame for children to feel good about themselves. One of the critical needs of young children is to experience successes that will lead to a sense of self-respect, self-confidence and increased self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1970). Possessing self-esteem enables children to try new things without too much fear of failure, to reach out and make friends, and to manage problems they are likely to meet along the way (Battle, 1982). Children need to recognize and understand who they are, and to learn how to communicate their feelings, values and beliefs to others. Positive self-esteem builds a solid foundation for life.

Self-esteem at the junior level is about how well children achieve the learning tasks of the curriculum (Higbee & Dwinell, 1996), how they do in athletics, how they look, and how they can make friends with other children
(Dubois & Hirsch, 1993). One could speculate that for some children self-esteem levels may decrease when they start school and have to cope in a strange new situation with many other new children and new rules to learn. One may also suspect that problems at school such as having difficulty with curriculum, being bullied or not having friends could also have a serious effect.

Societal stresses and changes have altered the expectations for schools and the children who attend them. Some of these stresses may involve changing value systems, family disintegration and economics that place quality of life and education for children far down on the list of priorities. It is essential to incorporate problem solving, communication, and human relations skills into the basic school curriculum. Strategies that could assist children with their activities at school and abroad may include (1) establishing meaningful relationships with peers and adults, (2) cooperative learning and group work and (3) by helping them find their positive traits, where they can feel good about themselves and make appropriate choices and decisions.

The classroom is an ideal place to promote self-esteem and instill interpersonal and academic development. When reviewing the research, few studies examine the effects of formal instruction of interpersonal skills on self-esteem development. Many schools instill programs such as student
of the week, birthday clubs, peer tutoring, field trips and stickers for good work. Further, many teachers are positive and offer praise towards their students. However, praise must be connected with values and the development of character, where children receive real feedback, not a superficial reward system (Adler, Cohen, Houston, Marly, Wingert, & Wright, 1992). There is little evidence of schools incorporating an instructional program where self-esteem and interpersonal development are the goal. Although it is probable that some teachers, or other school personnel, do personal development programs in the classroom, there is little documentation provided in the research.

There is plenty of research on self-esteem and its relevance to normal childhood development. There have been studies on the relationship between self-esteem and achievement (Glick, 1970; Lahaderme & Jackson, 1970; Schumuck, 1963, 1966; Wiggins, Schatz & West, 1994), self-esteem and depression (Battle, 1987, 1980), self-esteem and teacher influence (Battle, 1976; Phillips, 1984), self-esteem and ethnicity (Bhatt & Tonks, 1992; Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters & Blust, 1988; Stalikas & Gavak, 1995), self-esteem and parental role (Alter, 1992; Cunningham, Bremner, & Secord-Gilbert, 1993; Garlett, 1993) and self-esteem and gender (American Association of University Women,
The literature related to the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal development is limited, however. Many studies examine only one interpersonal skill, such as cooperation. Moreover, many studies do not involve empirical evidence, and those that do tend to focus on older populations. To date, much of the research found on interpersonal skills and development involves adults in college or in the workplace (Cappelli & Rogovskiy, 1995; Martin, 1995). The studies report such things as how employees in the workplace lack personal and interpersonal skills and how this affects productivity and cohesion. Or, they outline the importance of staff training and professional development in the area of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, there appears to be a need for empirical data on the relationship between self-esteem development and interpersonal skills in young children.

One example of an existing program in Canada was a pilot project conducted during the 1997-1998 school year in which 1000 kindergarten pupils in Newfoundland, Ontario, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan received a book as part of their curriculum called I Like Me (The Windsor Star, April 17, 1998). The project designers wanted to help bolster confidence in the students, as well as provide opportunities for students to become better readers, problem solvers and
students who were willing to take chances. Themes of the book included good decision making and honesty. During the 1998-1999 school year, the program was expanded to 11,000 students across Canada at the kindergarten level.

Another interpersonal development program called the ASSIST program was designed to increase students’ growth in self-esteem, self-management, interpersonal relationships and emotional development (Huggins, 1994). The program was developed by Pat Huggins and the curriculum was based on the research of Dr. Bernard Haldane. The work of Dr. Haldane involved teaching interpersonal skills to adults in the workplace and in prisons. The six books involved in the ASSIST program were modified from Dr. Haldane’s work to meet the needs of school children. Using the Los Angeles Objective Exchange self-esteem test, measures developed by the researcher, and self-reports, statistically assessed the books for the ASSIST program. Huggins reported that the results were “statistically significant” in eight of the nine school districts involved in the program; however, actual documentation was not available from the author (Pat Huggins, personal communication, September, 30, 1998).

The book Helping Children Find Their Strengths (1994) was a manual developed as an addition to the ASSIST program after the original six manuals were assessed. Self-reports and a pretest/posttest that asked the students to write down
three of their strengths were used to evaluate the program presented in this manual. Although the data are not in print, Huggins reported that the results were positive (Pat Huggins, personal communication, September, 30, 1998). The lack of empirical data, however, indicates that the results of the research should be accepted with caution.

In the following sections, empirical studies dealing with self-esteem will be discussed with regard to their relevance to the development of interpersonal skills.

B. Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, relevant terms are as follows:

**Compensatory school:** a school where additional funds are granted for students who require a counterbalance of programs, teaching methods and special services such as, counseling. The students who attend these schools may experience an array of problems such as, poor school attendance, unstable home life, family violence and poverty.

**Interpersonal skills:** the student's ability to relate with others through self-esteem enhancement, meeting and making friends, anger management, cooperation and problem solving skills as measured by the Interpersonal Skills Inventory and an instrument called How I Feel About Others
in My Class.

Junior level: a student in a southwestern Ontario school who is currently in grade four, five and six.

Self-esteem: the students' perception of their own self-worth as measured by the Culture-Free Self-esteem for Children (Form B).

C. Review of Literature

The following is a review of the literature dealing with the self-esteem and interpersonal skills of students at the junior level.

Defining Self-esteem

There are numerous definitions of self-esteem, but generally it refers to a person's perception of their own worth. Branden (1992) stated that self-esteem is confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life and confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving and entitled to assert our wants and needs. Branden (1969) also wrote that self-esteem referred to an individual’s view of him or herself and that it is the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect.

Coopersmith (1967) claimed that self-esteem is a
personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes individuals hold toward themselves. He stated that it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which individuals believe themselves to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.

Battle (1982) viewed self-esteem as four interrelated aspects. He integrated these four aspects into an assessment tool called the Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory. The inventory explores an individual’s perceptions about their general self-worth and relationships with peers, how their parents view them, how they are treated at home and their success at school. Battle stated that the general dimension of the inventory involved the overall or general perception that the individual had about his own worth. Battle explained that the social dimension referred to the individual’s perception of interpersonal peer relationships. The academic component was referred to as the individual’s perception of his ability to succeed academically and the parental section referred to the individual’s perception of his status at home, which included his subjective perception of how he thought his parents viewed him. Battle (1981) stated that an individual’s perception of self developed gradually and became more differentiated as he matured and interacted with significant others. Once established, however it tended to
be fairly stable and resistant to change.

**Why is Self-esteem So Important?**

As with many aspects of human development, a positive sense of self-esteem and competency are not equally experienced by all children. However, there are significant benefits to the education system to have students with high self-esteem. Numerous authors have made this claim (Allan & Nairne, 1992, McFadden, 1993, Clemes & Bean, 1981, Mehaffey & Sandberg, 1992, Battle, 1982 and Canadian Education Association, 1994).

Allan and Nairne (1992) stated in their book that the emphasis on self-esteem has been heightened because of the consequences of poor self-esteem on students and school climate. Poor self-esteem has been associated with (1) poor interpersonal skills, (2) poor academic achievement, (3) inability to manage anger and conflicts, (4) inability to solve problems, and (5) unrealistic expectations. The authors suggested that children who cannot understand and manage their emotions or interact successfully with peers and adults face serious problems at school. These children will not be able to give their full attention to schoolwork and learning and will consequently do less well socially and academically than their classmates.
McFadden (1993), an Ontario secondary school teacher, noted in his discussion paper that students with high self-esteem did better in school work, found it easier to resist peer pressure, were more sociable and were more willing to try new things and take risks. He claimed that students with high self-esteem were more receptive to the educational process and responded in more positive directions toward the teacher, work and the school in general.

Clemes and Bean (1981) suggested in their book that children with high self-esteem acted positively, assumed responsibility, tolerated frustration, felt able to influence their environments, and were proud of their deeds. Conversely, they suggested children with low self-esteem were easily led by others, became frustrated quickly and easily, often blamed others for their shortcomings, and tended to avoid difficult situations.

It was Mehaffey and Sandberg's (1992) opinion that children with lower self-esteem seemed to need a great deal of support and lacked the skills needed to connect successfully with their peers. These students had difficulty playing with others on the playground, working in classroom groups, and gaining attention in positive ways.

Battle (1982) discussed in his book that children with lower self-esteem are more likely to (1) be low in initiative, (2) be nonassertive, (3) be pessimistic,
(4) employ the defenses of projection and repression, (5) be indecisive, (6) emit self-defeating responses and (7) conform more readily to social pressure. He further stated that children with lower self-esteem tend to display an unhappy disposition, are timid and shy, typically feel that parents and other significant others do not love and prize them as much as they should and usually experience difficulties in their interpersonal interactions with peers.

In a report developed by the Canadian Education Association (1994), it was their opinion that children whose parents conveyed to them that they were loved and accepted, felt valued and supported and developed a healthy self-esteem. The paper suggested that stress in the home and in society played a role in the students' view of themselves. Other factors considered to affect self-esteem were lack of sufficient parental nurturing, poverty, violence and abuse, feelings of rejection, being repeatedly criticized, feeling incompetent and feeling unattractive.

The School's Role

Self-esteem has been the subject of a great amount of research that indicated its importance in the school setting (Campbell, 1967; Dinkmeyer, 1971). It is desirable for the teacher, as well as the school, to promote favorable self-
esteem development (Snyder, 1965; Van Koughnett & Smith, 1969). Przybylski (1997) reported that self-esteem and adequate social skills made it easier to function in our society, and it should be the educational system's role to provide social skills that children may not learn otherwise.

A paper completed by Brock (1993) suggested that after the home, the school was most often the one place that could change the perception children have of themselves. Brock found that since a child spends over half of each working day in the school setting, the school is involved to a very large extent in the building of self-esteem. Brock further concluded that the way a child relates to peers and teachers, the social feedback received from those people, and the child's perceptions of those interactions, were crucial factors in the formation and building of self-esteem. Brock stated that the climate of the school, the rules and procedures all played a role in fostering self-esteem or placing obstacles in its path.

Until recently, studies have demonstrated that schools have not been active in developing student self-esteem. Wiggins, Schatz and West (1994) suggested in their paper that despite the importance placed on self-esteem by researchers, psychologists, and counselors, few schools have done more than employ sporadic 'hit or miss' procedures with selected students in helping in the affective domain.
Purkey and Watson (1984) further suggested that although there were certainly caring teachers and support staff in almost any school who influenced self-esteem positively, there were few programs in which self-esteem was a primary focus of learning.

**Self-esteem and Girls**

According to several research studies, there were particular concerns that needed to be examined with regard to self-esteem and girls (American Association of University Women, 1990, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991.) Some research has concluded that there are differences in gender and self-esteem where girls have lower self-esteem than boys which is affects their academic success (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Sadker, Sadker, & Klein, 1986).

The American Association of University Women (1990) commissioned a polling firm to measure the self-esteem of 3000 boys and girls ages nine to fifteen. They were asked about their self-confidence, career goals, and scholarly interests. According to the American Association of University Women, the poll showed that between the ages of eleven and sixteen, girls experience a dramatic drop in self-esteem, which in turn significantly affects their
ability to learn and achieve. They reported that girls beginning at age 10 or 11 experienced a dramatic loss in self-esteem and that on average 69% of elementary school boys and 60% of elementary school girls reported that they were "happy the way I am"; among high school students the percentages were 46% for boys and only 29% for girls. The main reason given for this claim was that girls receive less teacher time and praise from teachers in the classroom than do boys which affects the level of self-confidence in girls and their academic capabilities.

Many researchers have criticized the results in this report, however. In a controversial book called Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women, (1994) author Christina Hoff Sommers challenged the belief that girls had lower self-esteem than boys and would therefore do less well in school. In her book she questioned findings of the self-esteem study commissioned by the American Association of University Women and explained, with the assistance from other psychologists (e.g., Barton J. Hirsch, Susan Harter, Wendy Wood) and sociologists (e.g., Naomi Gerstel) that the findings from the study are misleading and deceptive. These researchers questioned the reliability and design of the study as well as the methods used to analyze the data.
It is evident that gender is an important variable that surrounds the controversy of self-esteem. There has been much research related to gender that has argued against the belief that boys have better self-esteem than girls (Gray-Little, & Applebaum, 1979; Kohr, 1974 and Trowbridge, 1972). In fact, if you currently look at the success rate in schools today, girls are slightly behind in math and science (Hoff Sommers, 1994), though the math and science test differentials are small compared to large differentials favoring girls in reading and writing.

Interpersonal Relationships and Peers

Students’ personal and social development is as important as their cognitive development. It is important for students to think well of themselves, to have a positive rather than a negative self-concept. As children get older, peers become more and more important. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) reported in their book that the interactions with other people that constitute one’s social environment provide challenges and experiences that influence one’s self-esteem. The writers stated that development and/or enhancement of one’s self-esteem cannot be accomplished in isolation. In other words, one’s psychological development is affected by one’s social development. Schmuck and
Schmuck also wrote that students who are accepted members of cohesive classrooms with a dispersed friendship structure experience high self-esteem and typically are working up to their intellectual potential. In contrast, students who are attracted to the class and wish to belong, and who, at the same time, view themselves as being rejected by some of their peers, will experience negative feelings about themselves and their schoolwork.

Research conducted by Kafer (1982) demonstrated that rejected students experience problems both in perceiving others and in reacting to them. Kafer showed that rejected and isolated students made more errors in recognizing the emotional expressions of others than did normal children. He stated that the interpersonal strategies of unpopular children backfire much more frequently than the interpersonal strategies of popular children. As a result, Kafer reported that unpopular children, more often than popular children, became noisy, obstinate, boastful, and rebellious to their teachers and peers. While children with moderate popularity often hesitated in initiating interactions, the most unpopular students continued to make attempts to be accepted by their peers.

According to Clemes and Bean (1981), children with high self-esteem generally have good relationships with others while children with low self-esteem tend to offer little
satisfaction to others. They report in their book that befriending a child with low self-esteem is often frustrating and discouraging for playmates and teachers and when children feel that they are not liked, relationships become problems sooner or later.

Many researchers and theorists have described different emphases in the interpersonal relationships of boys and girls and have suggested that boys and girls deal differently with issues that arise in relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Putallaz & Sheppard, 1992; Rubin, 1985). The primary focus of a study by Rumbaugh Whitesell and Harter (1996), was to examine the influence of friendship status on children’s expectations of their reactions to anger-provoking scenarios, and how the impact of friendship might vary according to age and gender. They wanted to see if there were differences between preadolescent boys and girls in their attributions of blame in anger-provoking situations and their control of anger. They found that the majority of boys took the blame themselves in anger situations, most often making self-excused attributions while girls were as likely to blame a friend as much as themselves. They also measured the students’ interpersonal feelings and expectations of happiness, hurt feelings and emotional distress in relation to anger-provoking scenarios. They found boys and girls reported similar levels of
happiness but girls were twice as likely as boys to have higher levels of hurt feelings. Also, girls reported higher levels of emotional distress than boys did. It is interesting to note however, that although this study showed that girls seemed to be more sensitive to the relationship context than boys, it may be that girls are more comfortable in talking about their feelings and relationships than boys (Gilligan, 1982; Rubin, 1985). Rubin stated that girls may find it easier to admit events that would violate their expectations that would lead to an intense emotional experience while boys may feel more compelled to be “tough” and present themselves in a way that would not affect their interpersonal relationships.

Research on children’s peer relations has emphasized the problems of socially rejected or unpopular children (Asher & Coie, 1990). Links have been found between early social difficulties and later adjustment problems in adolescent and adult life (Hymel, Rubin, Rowden & LeMare, 1990). Researchers have recently categorized rejected children as either aggressive or nonaggressive in their peer interpersonal relationships. Hymel, Bowker and Woody (1993) examined whether subgroups of unpopular children differ in terms of competence in multiple domains. The subgroups were identified through peer evaluations and were divided into aggressive unpopular, withdrawn unpopular, aggressive-
withdrawn unpopular and average status children. The participants completed a multidimensional self-concept measure that provided an evaluation of self-concept in four domains, academic, athletic, peer relations and appearance. The subgroups were then compared in terms of peer and self-perceptions of competence. Results indicated that the three subgroups of unpopular children exhibited distinct profiles according to peer perceptions. Aggressive withdrawn unpopular children were viewed as deficient in almost every area assessed and the aggressive unpopular and withdrawn unpopular children exhibited particular strengths and weaknesses across domains. Further, the withdrawn unpopular children expressed more accurate, but negative self-evaluations, while children in the aggressive subgroups tended to overestimate their competencies.

Boivin and Hymel (1997) conducted a study involving 793 eight to ten year old children in the third, fourth, and fifth grades that evaluated a social process model describing how aggression and withdrawal lead to negative social self-perceptions. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the social process model through which problematic social behavior such as, aggression and withdrawal could be linked with negative social self-perceptions. Within a six-week period, the researchers interviewed the students using various scales that measured self-concept, peer assessments
of social behavior, loneliness, affiliate relationships and peer status. The study revealed that peer rejection is a marker of maladjustment and plays a role in the child’s concurrent social adjustment. The impact of peer rejection and withdrawal on social self-perceptions appears to be mediated in part by actual negative experiences with peers, although other interpersonal processes may also be involved.

The study revealed that withdrawal and negative peer status were uniquely related to loneliness and that boys were slightly more lonely than girls ($\beta = 0.08$). It also showed that boys were more rejected than girls overall ($\beta = -0.12$) and that boys were slightly more likely than girls to have a greater number of affiliate links ($\beta = 0.09$).

**Building Self-esteem**

Positive self-esteem is heavily influenced by the extent to which the child’s basic needs have been met. Coopersmith (1970) developed a five-step model with important elements of having basic needs met. They were security, identity, belonging, purpose, and personal competence. Coopersmith’s self-esteem building programs and similar programs developed by other researchers were the building blocks to many self-esteem programs that are
currently used in schools.

A self-esteem program at Vincent Massey Public school in Cornwall, Ontario is one example of a self-esteem-building program (Canadian Education Association, 1994). The principal of the school realized that children did not feel good about themselves, and staff morale was low. The principal reported an increase in vandalism, absenteeism of students and teachers and the excessive use of inappropriate language. The purpose of the program was to help students become more achievement oriented by helping them to have their basic human needs met. The goals and objectives of the program were (1) that each child at every grade level would expand his or her self-esteem, (2) to build trusting relationships, (3) to provide opportunities to discover major sources of influence on oneself, (4) to increase awareness of, and skills in, friendship making, (5) to enhance ability to make decisions, seek alternatives and identify consequences, and 6) to provide opportunities to increase awareness of individual competencies and strengths (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991).

The principal of the school decided that at the beginning of the school day each teacher was responsible for providing 20 minutes of pre-planned teaching units for students about self-esteem development. The program also stipulated that positive self-esteem be promoted throughout
the school at all times. This task was accomplished by implementing other programs such as peer mediators and positive role modeling by the school staff.

The principal of the school reported that over time students and teachers felt better about themselves and school climate improved. The Coopersmith Inventory (1970) was used to measure self-esteem and the principal stated that self-esteem levels were twice as high as before over a two-year period. The principal recommended that all schools incorporate self-esteem programs within their curriculum. It is important to note however, that although the school reported increases in self-esteem, there are no data available in print to support this claim.

A program to address self-esteem called Project Self-Confidence was operated during the 1989-90 school year in Simcoe county in Ontario (Ontario Institute of Education, 1991). The goal of the program was to teach shy/withdrawn children social skills and to give them emotional support in school. The program was meant to develop assertiveness, risk taking, more creativity and greater classroom participation. The program was divided into four stages that involved (1) rapport building, (2) strategies for improved self-confidence and self-esteem, (3) successful self-esteem strategies such as role-play and (4) risk taking in the classroom. Project Self-Confidence assistants
observed candidates for the program in their classrooms and by using a screening checklist as a guide, four children per school were selected to participate. Over 300 children were subjected to the self-confidence program over the entire school year. The sample was broken down into urban and rural children as the treatment groups and children on the waiting list as the control group. The Project Self-Confidence assistants saw the children once a week for about one half hour and the children completed Child Rating Scales at the beginning and end of the program. The checklists measured the degree of social-emotional growth in the children over the school year. The teacher for the child in the program also completed a Teacher-Child rating scale at the beginning and end of the program.

The program was evaluated as very successful in that all children showed improvements in their social-emotional development by the ending of the program. For example, the average urban child in Project Self-Confidence obtained a score of 18.3 in the shy/anxious category at the beginning ratings and this declined by 3.47 points at the ending of the program. The urban and rural children scored differently in that the urban children scored higher in the shy/anxious category and the rural children scored higher in the social skill category. The children who were not serviced showed no change between pre-test and post-test
times. The teacher’s ratings did not have a significant impact on the children’s acting out behavior in the classroom but it did make a significant difference on the shy/anxious behavior and on their social skills.

A self-esteem program was implemented at Wagner Elementary school in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. Principal Charles Webber facilitated a self-esteem program for students in grade 2 to grade 6 that was intended to foster the development of responsible life long learners with high self-esteem (Webber, 1990). The number of student participants was not indicated. The objective of the program was to promote (1) group cohesion activities such as building school spirit, (2) activities that highlight cooperation, responsibility, and personal growth, (3) good appearance of the school and (4) staff morale. The teachers exposed their students to the interactive strategies described in 9 to 19: Crucial Years for Self-esteem in Children and Youth (Battle, 1990) and those developed by staff members. Some of the interactive strategies included teachers communicating mutual respect and encouragement to students by listening to student needs and focusing on positive behaviors instead of negative behaviors. Other strategies included (1) youth tutoring programs, (2) parent training programs, (3) school camping, (4) a technique called the magic circle designed to enhance interpersonal
relationships and (5) group and individual counselling. The students completed the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory (Form A) on two occasions.

The results of the program were reported to be increased initiative, increased teacher morale and high marks from the parents. However, these variables were not quantified but were merely supported by anecdotal reports from the teachers and parents. Results on the self-esteem inventory indicated that students total and general self-esteem had increased significantly from pretest to posttest. However, social, academic, and parent self-esteem did not change significantly. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and significance levels associated with the means of self-esteem scores earned by participating subjects on two occasions.
TABLE 1
Self-esteem Means, Standard Deviations and Significance
Scores for Elementary Subjects on Two Occasions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-esteem</th>
<th>Pretest Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Posttest Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.47</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>39.63</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>16.07</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An elementary school in Southfield Michigan implemented a self-esteem enhancement program in their school to determine the effect it would have on the students (Hollen, 1987). The program was for boys and girls enrolled in grades 2 through 6, and students were randomly assigned to experimental or control groups. The students in the experimental group participated in the self-esteem enhancement program, and the control group did not participate. The number of participants was not revealed. Both groups completed the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory for Children (Form B) on two occasions that acted as the pretest and posttest. The experimental group was exposed to
interactive strategies described in _9 to 19: Crucial Years for Self-esteem in Children and Youth_ (1990) and others developed by staff members. These strategies included a mutual respect strategy involving the teacher’s communicating to each student that he or she was respected as a unique individual, and encouragement, where teachers encouraged students by emphasizing positive rather than negative aspects of their behavior. The teachers also provided students with many different types of self-esteem building activities.

The results on the posttest indicate that participants total self-esteem scores were significantly higher \((t=3.50, p<.01; \text{Means}= 22.28 \text{ vs. } 19.70).\) The study concluded that the strategies employed by the staff of a Southfield Michigan school exerted a strong positive effect on the self-esteem of the experimental subjects.

Foley (1987) looked at the effect of self-esteem curriculum structures on grade four students at elementary schools in Edmonton, Alberta. The researcher wanted to compare the scores earned by the experimental and control groups who completed the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory (Form A) on two occasions. The sample involved 500 students in the experimental group and 500 students in the control group. The experimental participants were exposed to the theme of self-esteem throughout the school year, and the
control members were exposed to Alberta’s mandated education curriculum for grade four students. Teachers were able to develop their own self-esteem curriculum for their class and the study was not specific on how much time the teacher needed to spend. The research found that students in the experimental group who were exposed to the locally developed curriculum experienced significantly higher self-esteem than those of control subjects who were exposed to the Alberta Department of Education's curriculum. A factorial analysis of co-variance was used (ANCOVA) to compare the posttest mean scores of the two groups using pretest as a covariate. Results indicated that experimental subjects experienced significantly gain in self-esteem than the control subjects.

At Alex Taylor Community School, located in a city setting with a predominantly white population, all students in grades 2 through 6 were exposed to a self-esteem enhancement program to determine the effects the program had on the students’ self-esteem (Battle, 1988). The number of participants was not provided. The students were exposed to the interactive strategies described in 9 to 19: Crucial years for Self-esteem in Children and Youth (1990). These strategies included teachers communicating mutual respect to each student and emphasizing encouragement, rather than negative aspects of their behavior. The teachers attended self-esteem workshops at which they were taught strategies
that they could employ to enhance the self-esteem of their students. Some of the ideas that the teachers implemented to help increase their students' self-esteem were a breakfast and nutrition program, concerts throughout the year, summer camp, police in school program, senior citizens drop in centre, cultural visitations, English as a second language program and recognition and awards ceremonies. The students completed the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory for Children (Form A) during September, 1987 and June, 1988.

Results indicated significant differences between students' pre and posttest self-esteem scores (Table 2) on total, general and academic self-esteem.

**TABLE 2**
Means and Significance of Self-esteem Scores for Elementary Subjects on Two Occasions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-esteem</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34.20</td>
<td>36.19</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>13.52</td>
<td>14.83</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>7.63</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data indicated that the total, general and academic self-esteem scores were significantly higher at posttest. The researchers concluded that the strategies employed by the teachers induced positive shifts in the self-esteem of participatory elementary students.

A similar study that Battle (1989) implemented in the Barrhead Alberta School District exposed all students in grade 2 through 6 to the program *9 to 19: Crucial Years for Self-esteem in Children and Youth* (1990) and others developed by district staff members. The number of participants was not revealed. The school was located in a rural setting with a predominantly Native population. Teachers attended self-esteem workshops and were taught strategies they could employ to enhance the self-esteem of their students. These strategies included communicating mutual respect between the teacher and students, and encouraging positive aspects of behavior rather than negative. Other strategies developed by district staff members included birthday announcements, drama performances, school teams, tooth fairy express, thank you letters and notes to students, positive poster displays, family luncheons, assemblies and recognition ceremonies, shared reading and writing, peer counsellors and youth tutoring, journals, parent/teacher communication, staff and student committees, happy grams, time sharing, helper of the day and
stars of the week. The students were given the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory (Form A) on two occasions, at the beginning and end of the school year.

The study concluded that the program had a positive effect on the student's self-esteem and induced positive shifts in the self-esteem of participatory elementary subjects. Results indicated that students improved significantly on all aspects of self-esteem (total, general, social, parent) except academic. Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and significance associated with the means of self-esteem scores earned by elementary level students on two occasions.

TABLE 3
Means, Standard Deviations and Significance of Self-esteem Scores for Elementary Subjects on Two Occasions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-esteem</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.15</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>37.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>15.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>7.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data displayed in Table 3 indicated that participatory elementary students experienced significant gains in all aspects of self-esteem except academic.

When comparing the two studies by Battle, it is important to note that there was a statistically significant increase in academic self-esteem in one study but no significant increase in academic self-esteem in the other study. Battle did not provide any reasons for the contradiction in results, but a possible explanation does exist. One could speculate that students at Alex Community School were academically better than students at Barrhead and differentially responsive even before the testing and program began.

Most educational professionals would agree that children and their needs are a primary concern in education. Yet, success in school is measured mainly by cognitive learning. Much of the time during school is spent on a government-mandated curriculum that is meant to enhance academic achievement. However, if we want to discover why children are not learning in school, we must also look at the students themselves and the environments from which they come. Achievement test scores are not always adequate measures of school success. In order to produce knowledgeable adults who can relate to those around them, as much attention must be paid to designing the curriculum to
teach affective skills as is given to teach cognitive skills.

Clearly it is important in schools to have programs that help build student self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. It is argued by professionals in the educational field (Bateman, 1997; Dana, 1997) that it is these skills that will carry students further in their life than what they may have learned in grade 5 math. Also, many children are not gaining the self-esteem they need from home. The school could be considered an inviting and appropriate place to assist those children at risk.

The research reviewed thus far in this paper linking self-esteem and interpersonal relationships has shown that students with higher self-esteem did better academically and found it easier to make friendships and resist peer pressures. Further, children with high self-esteem generally have a good relationship with other children and adults. Children with lower self-esteem also demonstrated (1) lack of self-control and coping skills, (2) avoidance of difficult situations and decisions, and (3) an inability to connect successfully with their peers.

Most research studies on the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationships are reports and documents that state there is a link, but there is not a lot of empirical data to back it up. Of the empirical studies
that were reviewed, many used qualitative measures to examine the research questions. Thus, there would appear to be a need for quantitative and qualitative research to examine the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationships as well as the effectiveness of various programs in influencing impact on self-esteem and interpersonal skill development.

D. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

Given the limitations in the existing research, it is legitimate to ask whether or not there are real demonstrable benefits to intervention programs. Thus, the first research question asks: Are there differences in the self-esteem and interpersonal relationships of grade four, five and six students after the implementation of a ten session program that is meant to develop interpersonal skills?

Second, given the controversy surrounding the literature on sex differences with self-esteem, it would be prudent to ask if females will receive lower self-esteem scores and benefit less from intervention than males.

Finally, given the stereotype that females are better with interpersonal skills than males, it would be
interesting to ask if males will receive lower interpersonal skill scores than females, and perhaps benefit more from intervention.

**Hypotheses**

Since there is not a compelling research base to argue for specific program effects, it is best to advance a working hypothesis only, namely, that this program will benefit the self-esteem of the students and the interpersonal skills of the students. Given the literature on gender and self-esteem, one could speculate that there would be a difference in the self-esteem of students according to gender, with females showing lower self-esteem.

As a working hypothesis it is predicted that, although female self-esteem scores will be lower than male scores, generally, both sexes will benefit from the program. Given the stereotype that females are better at interpersonal skills, one could speculate that girls may test out higher initially, but again, both sexes will benefit from the program.
CHAPTER II

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

All elementary level students who were in grade four, five and six at two compensatory public schools in Southwestern Ontario, were involved in the study (N=285). There were 147 males and 138 females. The schools were located in lower income areas of the city and had a wide variety of different cultural groups. The students in these classroom samples were not selected specifically by the researcher but were placed there by school administrators. The researcher chose the schools and one school was arbitrarily selected as the treatment school while the other served as the control school. The selection process provided the researcher with a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, academic abilities, family structures, self-esteem levels and a fairly equal distribution of males and females. During the ten sessions of the practical part of the study, participants in the control group received the regular classroom curriculum while participants in the
treatment group were involved in a program that was designed to develop interpersonal skills.

B. Instrumentation

One instrument used in this study was the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory (Form B), which James Battle (1992) developed. It measured the self-esteem of the students in both groups. The instrument consisted of 30 questions and used a "yes" or "no" response format. The self-esteem components for the inventory were divided into five categories (i.e., general, social, academic, parent related self-esteem and the lie sub-test). General self-esteem (10 items) is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' overall perceptions of their self-worth. Social self-esteem (5 items) is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with peers. Academic self-esteem (5 items) is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to an individual's perceptions of their ability to succeed academically. Finally, parent related self-esteem (5 items) is the aspect of self-esteem that refers to individuals' perceptions of their status at home, including their subjective perceptions of how their parents view them. The Lie sub-test is constructed from items that indicate
defensiveness.

In terms of the reliability and validity of the Culture Free Self-esteem instrument, one hundred and ten boys and girls enrolled in grades 3 through 6 participated in the initial test-retest reliability study of Form B. Findings of the study indicated that the correlation for the 110 subjects ranged from .79 to .92 for test-retest reliability estimates. Sub-test correlations for the group ranged from .49 to .80 with respect to validity. A comparative study of Battle's Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory (1992) for children and Coopersmith's (1967) Self-esteem Inventory revealed that correlations between the two instruments were significant for all grade levels and when male and female scores were compared. Correlations for the total sample ranged from .71 to .80; values for boys ranged from .72 to .84; for girls from .66 to .91.

Scores for the inventory are derived by totaling the number of items checked from the general, academic, social and parental categories that indicate high self-esteem, excluding the lie scale items. The lie sub-test measured defensiveness. Battle (1992) revealed that individuals who responded defensively to self-esteem items refused to ascribe to themselves characteristics of a generally valid but socially unacceptable nature. For example, one of the statements on the sub-test is, "I always tell the truth."
Lying some of the time is a social convention, but it is also considered to be undesirable behavior. Thus, he believed that a person who would deny this common social fault would tend to be more defensive that the person who would admit it. A separate score may be computed by totaling the number of items checked correctly in the lie scale. Thus, the total possible score for Form B is 25, and the highest possible lie score is 5. Battle recommended that scores for Form B could be classified as follows: a score of 23+ is very high, 19-22 is high, 12-18 intermediate, 7-11 is low, and 6- is very low. In addition to the total score, separate scores for each of the sub-tests may be computed for analyses.

An instrument measuring interpersonal skills was developed following an adult scale model. This Interpersonal Relationships Inventory (see Appendix G) consisted of 25 questions and required students to circle the most appropriate answer. The students responded on a likert-type scale (1=never, 2=hardly ever, 3=sometimes, 4=usually, and 5=always). The researcher developed the inventory mainly because there were no interpersonal skill inventories available for children. The instrument was modified from an adult instrument called Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO-B) (Schutz, 1978). The 54-item FIRO-B examined the behaviors that a
person exhibited to others. Fifteen items were selected from the FIRO-B and used as models in the development of this instrument for young children. This Interpersonal Relationships Inventory for children measured the level of interpersonal skills of the participants based on 25 items, 15 positive-worded and 10 negative-worded. After inverting the 10 negative-worded items, scores for the inventory were derived by totaling the values of the circled responses. The higher the score the better the subject handled interpersonal relationships. The highest score indicating high interpersonal skills is 125 and the lowest score indicating low interpersonal skills is 25. Respondents circle 5 as the best possible answer to the positive-worded items, and circle 1 as the best possible answer to the negative-worded items.

The third instrument is 'How I Feel About Others In The Class' (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). It examined liking patterns in the classroom as a measure of interpersonal relationships. The data were tabulated by using a matrix system with as many rows and columns as there were students in the class. The rows contained the choices made by the student whose number appeared at the left and the columns contained the positive or negative choices received by the student whose number appeared at the top of the column. By adding the total number of positive and negative entries in
the column, a score was generated for each student.

A Teacher checklist (see Appendix G) was developed to assess demographics and potential risk factors of the students. Characteristics assessed by teacher ratings included academic achievement, linguistic efficiency in English, absenteeism, lateness, referrals to the disciplinary office, ability to interact with peers and adults, low self-esteem, problem solving ability and aggressive behavior. The teachers rated the students as low risk, moderate risk or high risk on each of the above variables. These measures allowed for additional information on each student in the research design and were used to compare with the three tests the student completed.

**Program**

The Assist Program is a program designed to promote students' growth in self-esteem, self-management, and interpersonal relationships (Huggins, 1994). The program consisted of a complete guide for the teacher or counselor to teach students how to develop critical personal and social skills. The classroom-tested activities in the manual included theoretical background, transparency masters, student handout masters and supplementary activities. The program was divided into ten different
sections (see Appendix H) with each section teaching a specific interpersonal skill. Throughout all the sessions, the researcher reinforced materials for the participants that were learned in earlier sessions. Also, the researcher used some outside material such as the video *I Blew It: Learning from Failure* (1991) to assist in teaching the interpersonal skills.

C. Design and Procedures

Permission to conduct this experimental research was granted by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, by the Public School Board and by the Principals of the two compensatory schools in Southwestern Ontario. Letters of explanation of the study and an invitation to participate were sent to the parents of the two schools (see Appendix E) and approval was given by most of the parents. The ten-session program commenced in November, 1998 and ended in December, 1998. When the sample was established, the researcher met with the students and obtained individual consent (see Appendix F). Individuals who did not want to participate in the 40-minute session, twice a week program had alternative arrangements made for them by the classroom teacher and school principal. Students wanting to participate in the ten session program completed the Culture
Free Self-esteem Inventory, the Interpersonal Skills Inventory, How I Feel About Others In My Class and were given 40 minutes to complete the forms. The pretest was completed at the beginning of November, 1998.

From November, 1998 to December, 1998, a ten session, 40 minute program that taught interpersonal skills occurred within the treatment group. At the final training session, the students were given the posttests and the researcher tabulated and analyzed the results.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The data collected from the 30-item form of the Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory measured the self-esteem level of the participants at pretest and posttest time. The Interpersonal Relationships Inventory measured the level of interpersonal skills of the participants at pretest and posttest time. The students also completed at pretest and posttest times the instrument called How I Feel About Others In My Class which is useful for gathering data relevant to classroom liking patterns. The students were asked to rate whom they liked the most and whom they do not like in their respective classes.

A $2 \times 2 \times 5 \times 2$ MANOVA was computed using Treatment (experimental, control), Gender (male, female), Sub-test (lie, general, social, academic, parent), and Time (pretest, posttest) as the independent variables on the Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory (CFSEI). There were no main effects for Treatment, $F(1, 281)=2.73$, $p>.1$, or Gender, $F(1, 281)=0.48$, $p>.1$, or Time, $F(1, 281)=0.47$, $p>.1$, and there were no interaction effects, $p>.05$. Thus, the various types
of self-esteem were not affected by the program. Table 4 reports the means and standard deviations for the experimental and control groups using the five scales.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for the Experimental and Control Groups for the Five CFSE Scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th></th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie Mean</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Mean</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Mean</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Mean</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Total Test score a 3-way ANOVA was computed on the CFSE Inventory. The independent variables were Group (experimental, control), Gender (male, female), and Time (pretest, posttest). There were no significant main effects for Group, F(1, 281)=2.74, p>.05 or Sex, F(1, 281)=0.47, p>.1, or Time, F(1, 281)=.05, p>.1. There were
also no interaction effects. Therefore, the treatment did not influence overall self-esteem. Table 5 reports the means and standard deviations for the experimental and control groups for the Total CFSE Inventory.

Table 5
Total Means and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups for the CFSE Inventory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.Dev</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Liking Scale, the means and standard deviations are reported in Table 6. On the Liking Scale, the pretest rating was subtracted from the posttest rating as a measure of change. A positive number would indicate growth. On the Not Liking Scale, reported in Table 7, the posttest rating was subtracted from the pretest rating. Again, a positive number would be viewed in a favorable way. For these measures, a 2 X 2 ANOVA was computed using Group (experimental, control) and Sex (male, female) as the independent variables. There was a significant Group by Sex interaction effect, F(2,280)=3.98, p<.05, due to females in the experimental group showing gains while males showed
losses. The opposite pattern was evident in the control group (see Figure 1). The two-way ANOVA for the Not-Liking Scale was not significant, \( p > .1 \).

Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups for the Liking Scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  Std.Dev</td>
<td>Mean  Std.Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.28  1.28</td>
<td>0.20   1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.11   1.60</td>
<td>-0.11  1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7
Means and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups for the Not-Liking Scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  Std.Dev</td>
<td>Mean  Std.Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.06   1.89</td>
<td>0.15   2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.19  2.00</td>
<td>-0.07  1.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liking Others Scale

Note. A positive number indicates improvement over time.
A factor analysis was computed for the 25 items on the Interpersonal Skills Inventory, using an Eigen value of 1, a factor loading of .5 as a selection criterion and a varimax rotation method. Three factors emerged. The first factor was termed "Sociable" and accounted for 34.8% of the variance. It included such items as "I try to be friendly to people", or "I try to stick up for a friend when others are hurtful to him or her". The second variable was termed "Outsider" and accounted for 17.65% of the variance and included such items as "I feel as though I do not fit in at school", or "I do not join social groups". The third factor was termed "Control" and accounted for 8.65% of the variance and included items such as, "I try to have other people do things I want done" or "I take charge of things when I am with people". Each scale showed adequate reliability using Cranbach's alpha (Sociable=.95, Outsider=.83, Control=.72).

Using these three factors, a 4-way ANOVA was computed using Group x Sex x Time x Factor. There was no treatment effect, $F(1, 279)=0.00$, $p>.1$. However, there was a main effect for Factor $F(2,278)=162.6$, $p<.001$ and, Factor x Sex and Factor x Time interaction effects, $p<.001$. To explore these interaction effects, three separate 3-way (Group x Sex x Time) ANOVAS were computed, one for each factor. Only
Factor three (Control) revealed a significant effect and that was for Sex, $F(1, 281)=4.0, p<.05$. This indicated males to be more controlling (Mean=2.43, SD=1.24) than females (Mean=2.16, SD=1.01). Table 8 reports the means and standard deviation for the experimental and control groups for the Sociable, Outsider and Control Factors.

Table 8
Means and Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups for the Sociable, Outgoing and Control Factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Female</td>
<td>Male Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>3.29 3.35</td>
<td>3.16 3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.32 1.37</td>
<td>1.42 1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsider</td>
<td>2.97 2.96</td>
<td>2.89 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.30 1.35</td>
<td>1.35 1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>2.44 2.10</td>
<td>2.29 2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.41 1.41</td>
<td>1.47 1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Teacher Rating Scales were distributed and approximately half were returned, therefore it was decided by the researcher to disregard this test. A possible explanation for the low return rate may be that the teachers were given the scale to complete during report card time and
the holiday season.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

It was predicted in the first hypothesis for this study that the Interpersonal Skills Program would have a significant effect on the self-esteem of the males and females involved in the program. However, there was no difference found in the self-esteem of the students after the ten session program for either the experimental or control groups. It was predicted in the second hypothesis that females and males would both benefit from the interpersonal skills program. There was a significant effect for females in the experimental group showing gains when compared to males for the Liking Scale. It would appear that females benefited more from the program than did males. In fact, males seemed to regress.

An alternate explanation may be found in the fact that the instructor of the program was female and may have unknowingly biased the curriculum, and in effect, related better to the girls than the boys. Further, the curriculum was developed by a woman which may have also had an effect. In addition, girls may have responded better to the program than boys because of the stereotype that girls "naturally" have better interpersonal skills than do boys.
Many of the girls involved in the program stated to the researcher that they really enjoyed the program, thought it was a lot of fun and were learning many new things. Some of the girls made the researcher cards to show their appreciation and interest. Other confounding variables that may have potentially affected the treatment included, persistent classroom disruption, pupil-teacher ratio, and attendance. Thus, there may be a number of confounding variables that need to be controlled in further research.

The length of the program may also have affected the results of the study. A program that is 40 minutes in length for ten sessions is unlikely to provide a probable impact. It might have been more effective to have a longer program such as an entire school year. Other programs that operated longer such as Project Self-Confidence (1990) from Simcoe County in Ontario produced positive results when the self-esteem program operated all school year. A longer program may have provided the students with a more consistent approach to interpersonal skills development and may have produced self-esteem changes.

There was no difference in the self-esteem of males and females in either the control or experimental groups. This was contrary to expectation. It was predicted based on previous research, that girls would have lower self-esteem
than boys. In this study however, both genders scored
generally the same on all scales. It could be that self-
esteeom differences become more apparent in the higher
grades. In any case, the results in this study are
consistent with a general lack of agreement as to whether
there is a difference in self-esteem related to gender.

The Liking and Not-Liking questionnaire posed a dilemma
in that students did not seem comfortable to write down who
it was in their class that they least liked due to fear or
belief that it was not okay to do so. In spite of this
however, significant differences were still found.

Another interesting factor that was revealed but not
expected from the study, was the identification that males
were more controlling than females for both the experimental
and control groups regardless of intervention. Differences
in gender seem to surface at around preschool age and
studies on gender differences have shown that boys are
more likely to be controlling, competitive and will express
anger more readily than girls (Grossman & Grossman, 1994).
If this is a reliable phenomenon, teachers may need to look
at how they structure classroom activities. For instance,
girls could be given more "control type" roles such as,
being leader of the group during group activities.

The aspect of leadership and familiarity with the
program may have also affected the results in this study.
The researcher has a social work background but has not had specific training in the area of self-esteem and interpersonal development. Attending a training workshop prior to implementing the program may have assisted the researcher in providing a higher quality program. Also, if teachers or other counsellors want to provide a self-esteem program in their schools, attending a teacher in-service training program would probably be beneficial (Bessell & Palomares, 1970).

Although there was not compelling evidence that this program was beneficial, there were some positive anecdotal comments made. The researcher asked the staff at the experimental school how they felt about the program, and most comments were positive. Many staff stated that the program consciously reminded them of the importance of self-esteem enhancement in schools. The students were also asked to complete an evaluation form rating the program. Comments included positive statements like "I learned how to stand up for myself when I am being pushed around", "I learned about the strengths that I never had before", and "A way I am going to use what I learned is when I feel down, to remember what I learned". Some negative comments included "I didn't like answering all the questions", "I didn't like doing the role playing" and "I didn't like doing some of the
worksheets, like doing the application to Dizzyworld". These comments provided the researcher with feedback that was important to her for her own personal and professional development.

The vocabulary on the self-esteem inventory and interpersonal skills inventory was seen to be a limitation for many students involved. Although the tests were intended for grade four students and higher, it seemed that the vocabulary in these tests was too difficult for some of the students to read and understand. Therefore, all testing was completed orally. Further, the Assist Program was modified during implementation to better assist many participants who were having difficulty reading the curriculum. The researcher found that having students respond orally or in picture fashion worked better than having them write down thoughts and opinions.

There seems to be an ongoing controversy among educators in Canada as to the degree of emphasis that should be placed on the affective versus cognitive aspects of development in schools. Some theorists have stressed that the function of the school is to foster intellectual growth (Ausubel, 1968), while others have argued that emotional factors strongly influence intellectual performance (Linskie, 1977). Most educators would agree however that it is a major responsibility of the education system to prepare
children for life after school. One could speculate that all children would benefit from experiences related to the acquisition of appropriate behaviors for personal and social development. Also, children who benefit from programs such as self-esteem programs may do better academically.

However, the present results from this study show that self-esteem programs need to be given considerable thought to accommodate student needs. Self-esteem programs are gaining increasing popularity among teachers and counsellors in schools. However, the research to date does not justify the claims made for the programs. There is a need for more controlled, long-term research using a multivariate approach in order to determine the extent to which programs can lead to their intended outcomes.
CHAPTER V
REFERENCES


Boivin, M., & Hymel, S. (1997). *Peer experiences and*


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Development, 64(2), 879-896.


Lippitt, R., & Gold, M. (1959). Classroom social


relationship of self-esteem to grades, achievement scores, and other factors critical to school success. *The School Counselor, 41*(3), 239-244.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

June, 1998

Ms. Celeste O’Neil
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXX, Ontario NXX XXX

Dr. L.L. Morton
Chair, Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4

Dear Dr. Morton:

As a post-graduate student working on my Masters of Education thesis at the University of Windsor, I am writing to request the approval of the Research Ethics Committee to conduct a research study. My faculty advisors for this research study are Dr. L.L. Morton and Dr. D. Shantz.

The proposed study will investigate the difference in the self-esteem of grade four, five, and six students, before and after the implementation of a ten-week program that develops interpersonal skills. The classes will be conveniently selected at two elementary compensatory schools in Southwestern Ontario. All students will be requested to complete a self-esteem inventory (pretest and posttest) where one school of students will be given the specialized program and the other school of students will maintain regular classroom curriculum. Other variables to be considered in this study are gender, student attendance, and referrals made to the discipline office. The names and responses of the students will be kept strictly confidential and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Approval to conduct this research, has to date, been approved by the Faculty of Education. Upon approval from the ethics committee, the Board of Education will be contacted for their approval to participate in the study.

Please find enclosed some additional information
regarding the purpose and procedures to be followed in carrying out this research, as well as, the material being considered for the study. I would appreciate a response from you as soon as possible so that I can proceed with the next step of this research study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me in the evenings at XXXXXXX or you can E-mail me at XXXXXXX@mnsl.net.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Celeste O’Neil
APPENDIX B

LETTER TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 5, 1998

Ms. Celeste Tremblay
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXX, Ontario NXX XXX

Dr. XXXXXXXXXX
Research Review Committee
Public School Board
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX, Ontario NXX XXX

Dear Dr. Berek:

The purpose of this letter is to request Board approval to conduct a research study that will form the basis of my Masters of Education thesis at the University of Windsor. Dr. L.L. Morton and Dr. D. Shantz from the faculty of Education are serving as thesis advisors.

The proposed study will investigate the difference in the self-esteem of grade four, five, and six students, before and after the implementation of a ten week program that develops interpersonal skills. The classes will be conveniently selected at two elementary compensatory schools in Southwestern Ontario. All students will be requested to complete a self-esteem inventory (pretest and posttest) where one school of students will be given the specialized program and the other school of students will maintain regular classroom curriculum. Other variables to be considered in this study are gender differences, student attendance, and referrals made to the discipline office. The names and responses of the students will be kept strictly confidential and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Approval to conduct this research, has to date, been approved by the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. Upon approval from the Board, the principals of the schools will be contacted for their approval to participate in the study.

Please find enclosed some additional information regarding the purpose and procedures to be followed in carrying out this research, as well as, the material being
considered for the study. I would appreciate a response from you by the end of June so that I can proceed with the next step of this research study. Please contact me with any questions or concerns during the day at XXXXXXXX, in the evening at XXXXXXX or you can E-mail me at XXXXXXX@mnsi.net.

If you require any further information regarding the proposed study, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Larry Morton at 253-4232, Ext. 3800.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Celeste Tremblay
APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

June 24, 1998

Ms. Celeste Tremblay
Address
XXXXXXXXX, Ontario NOX XXX

Mrs. XXXXXXXX, Principal
XXXXXXXXXXXX Public School
Address
XXXXXXXX, Ontario NXXXXX

Dear Mrs. XXXXXXX:

The purpose of this letter is to request your approval to conduct a research study in your school that will form the basis of my Masters of Education thesis at the University of Windsor. Dr. Larry Morton and Dr. Doreen Shantz from the Faculty of Education are serving as thesis advisors.

The proposed study will investigate the difference in the self-esteem of grade four, five and six students at the beginning and end of the implementation of a ten-week program that develops interpersonal skills. The classes will be conveniently selected at two elementary schools in Southwestern Ontario. All students will be requested to complete a self-esteem inventory, interpersonal skills inventory and a Liking and Not Liking scale (pretest and posttest) where one school of students will be given the specialized program and the other school of students will maintain regular classroom curriculum. The names and responses of the students will remain strictly confidential and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Approval to conduct this research, has to date, been approved by the Faculty of Education Graduate Studies Committee, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee and the Research Review Committee from the Public School Board.

Please find enclosed some additional information
regarding the purpose and procedures to be followed in carrying out this research, as well as, the material being considered for the study. Please contact me with any questions or concerns during the day at XXXXXXX, in the evening at XXXXXXX or you can E-mail me at XXXXXX@mnsi.net.

If you require any further information regarding the proposed study, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Larry Morton at 253-4232, Ext. 3800.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Celeste Tremblay
APPENDIX D

LETTER TO THE TEACHER

September, 1998

Dear Teacher:

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in a research study in your school that will form the basis of my Masters of Education thesis at the University of Windsor. Dr. Larry Morton and Dr. Doreen Shantz from the Faculty of Education are serving as thesis advisors.

The proposed study will investigate the difference in the self-esteem of grade four, five and six students at the beginning and end of the implementation of a ten-week program that develops interpersonal skills. The classes will be conveniently selected at two elementary schools in Southwestern Ontario. All students will be requested to complete a self-esteem inventory, interpersonal skills inventory and a Liking and Not Liking scale (pretest and posttest) where one school of students will be given the specialized program and the other school of students will maintain regular classroom curriculum. The names and responses of the students will remain strictly confidential and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Approval to conduct this research, has to date, been approved by the Faculty of Education Graduate Studies Committee, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee and the Research Review Committee from the Public School Board and the Principal of your school.

Please find enclosed some additional information regarding the purpose and procedures to be followed in carrying out this research, as well as, the material being considered for the study. Please contact me with any questions or concerns during the day at XXXXXXX, in the evening at XXXXXXX or you can E-mail me at XXXXXXX@mnsi.net.

If you require any further information regarding the proposed study, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Larry Morton at 253-4232, Ext. 3800.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
APPENDIX E

LETTER TO PARENT

October 27, 1998

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child has been invited to participate in a research study at your school. The purpose of this study is to improve on ways to understand and help children in the areas of interpersonal skills and self-esteem.

I am requesting permission for your child to complete three questionnaires (before and after the program) about how they feel about themselves and relate to others. Your child will also be asked to participate in a five week development program during class time regarding various interpersonal skills such as, conflict resolution, meeting and making friends and helping children find their strengths. Also, your child’s teacher will be requested to complete a Student Risk Factor questionnaire about your child at the end of the program to provide additional information about the population in the study.

All questionnaire results will be kept confidential and your child’s identity will not be revealed. This study will not in any way affect your child’s grades and will not be part of the school record. Similarly, confidentiality will be maintained should any publications result from this study. Being a part of this study is entirely voluntary. You can discontinue your child’s participation at any time during the project by notifying the researcher or classroom teacher. Your child is also free to discontinue participation at any time. There are no risks or inconveniences associated with this study other than your child’s time to complete the questionnaires and their participation in the program. It is hoped that this research will help in the development of improved interpersonal skills training and self-esteem building programs for children. Further, the results of this study will be made available to you, upon request.
Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study, or do not want your child to participate, please contact me at your child’s school. If you have any questions of an ethical nature, please contact Dr. L.L. Morton, Chair of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee at 253-4232, Ext. 3800.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Celeste Tremblay
APPENDIX F

LETTER TO STUDENT

Consent for Students

You have been invited to participate in a research study. Your parent(s)/guardian feels it is "OK" for you to take part in this project. All you have to do is answer some questions about the way you think and feel.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can agree to withdraw at any time. It is clear to you that your name will not be recorded, that your answers will be kept strictly confidential, and none of the results will have any affect on your grades.

I __________________________ agree to participate in this study.

Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________
APPENDIX G

INSTRUMENTS
**Interpersonal Skills Inventory**

Name: ________________________________  

Circle the answer that best describes you. Please only circle one answer for each question. Thank you.  

**Scale:** 1=never; 2=hardly ever; 3=sometimes; 4=usually; 5=always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I try to be with people.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Other kids want me to be their friend.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel as though I do not fit in at school.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I try to be friends with someone unpopular.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I try to stick up for a friend when others are hurtful to him or her.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I try to walk up to someone I do not know and start a conversation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I let other people take charge of things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I do not join social groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I try to be friendly to people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I let other people decide what to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I like people to invite me to things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I like people to act close toward me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I like people to act distant toward me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. I like people to act friendly toward me. 1 2 3 4 5

15. I do not like people to ask me to participate in their conversations. Never Always
   1 2 3 4 5

16. I try to have close, personal relationships with people. Never Always
   1 2 3 4 5

17. I do not like people to include me in their activities. Never Always
   1 2 3 4 5

18. I try to take an active part in a group and enjoy being involved. Never Always
   1 2 3 4 5

19. I try to have other people do things I want done. Never Always
   1 2 3 4 5

20. I try to work well with others in my classroom. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5

21. I take charge of things when I am with people. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5

22. I let other people strongly influence my actions. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5

23. I try to avoid being alone. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5

24. I am easily led by people. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5

25. When people are doing things together, I tend not to join them. Never Always
    1 2 3 4 5
How I Feel About Others In My Class

Name: ____________________________

Everybody has different feelings about everybody else. We like some people a lot, some a little bit, and some not at all. Sometimes we think it is not proper or polite to dislike other people, but when we are really honest about it, we know that everyone has some negative feelings about some of the people he or she knows. There are some people who like you a lot and some who don’t like you at all.

There are no right or wrong answers. (Use the class list to answer the following questions.)

Which three persons in this class do you feel most friendly toward? Which three persons in this class do you feel least friendly toward? Using your class list with names and numbers, write the three numbers in the blanks.

(Student’s Number)

The three I like the most: ____________________________

(Student’s Number)

The three I like the least: ____________________________
Teacher checklist-Student Risk Factors

Please complete the following checklist for each student in your class. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential.

Date: _______________________

Student Name: _______________________

Student Date of Birth: __________  __________  __________  

Day    Month    Year

Please check ( ) the response that is most appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academic Achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proficiency in English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Absenteeism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lateness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Referrals to Disciplinary Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ability to Interact with Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ability to Interact with Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Problem Solving Ability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Aggressive Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments:
APPENDIX H

ASSIST PROGRAM

The sessions will be divided as follows:

1. **Session 1**: The first session explained the purpose of the program to the students. Consent forms for the students were signed, the pretests were completed and group rules will be discussed. The session ended with a warm-up exercise, a get to know each other activity.

2. **Session 2**: The second session helped students to understand and develop their strengths. The participants will build self-esteem by analyzing experiences they are proud of and will learn how to use this expanded identity as an opportunity for new successes.

3. **Session 3**: The third session continued to focus on experiences of students and the development of their strengths. The participants will learn and gain knowledge and respect for their particular strengths.

4. **Session 4**: The fourth session involved teaching friendship skills through role playing where students will learn to identify behaviors used by children who get along well with their peers. The participants will examine their own behavior and determine changes they need to make to gain friends. In addition, this session focuses on listening, understanding others’ perspectives and feelings and being honest but kind.

5. **Session 5**: The fifth session included activities designed to enable students to acknowledge, accept and constructively express their anger. Participants learned a variety of techniques to release energy after anger arousal, to use thinking skills for choosing constructive behaviors when angry, to use inner speech to inhibit aggressive behaviors, ways to diffuse the anger of others and a model for resolving classroom conflicts. Skills were learned through roleplay.

6. **Session 6**: The sixth session included a series of activities for teaching students the skills necessary for cooperative learning. The program focused on the skills of self-management, listening, collaborative problem solving, and leadership. Students will learn to resolve conflicts through negotiation and compromise. The students made Cinquains.
7. **Session 7**: The seventh session involved building self-esteem in the classroom. Through activities, participants refined self-descriptions and acquired an appreciation for their uniqueness. They also learned about self-encouragement, and their own responsibility for their academic and personal success. The students looked at job interviewing and letter of application.

8. **Session 8**: The eighth session provided a collection of strategies that promote mutual support and strengthen connections in the classroom. Included in this session were classroom management procedures and a large collection of activities for establishing a nurturing classroom.

9. **Session 9**: The ninth session involved a celebration of strengths party. Students learned ways to help themselves believe in their strengths. A video called *I Blew It: Learning from Failure* (Sunburst, 1990) was shown and discussed.

10. **Session 10**: The final session briefly reviewed previous sessions and feedback was requested from the students about the program. Finally, the posttests (see Appendix G) were administered to the participants.
VITA AUCTORIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME:</th>
<th>Celeste Tremblay O’Neil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH</td>
<td>Windsor, Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR OF BIRTH</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Tilbury District High School 1983-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario 1989-1993 B.S.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario 1996-2000 M.Ed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>