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EFFECTIVE SECONDARY CHARACTER EDUCATION: IMPACT ON SECONDARY
STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS AND REINFORCING CHARACTER STRENGTHS

By

N'Quavah R. Velazquez

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate in Education

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Lynn University,

College of Education

Lynn University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed study is to provide a rationale to implement an effective student centered secondary character education program that will (1) characterize the components of effective secondary character education; (2) help students identify and use their character strengths; (3) assist students to increase their social skills; and (4) provide the basis for action research. The reason for this research is to validate the effectiveness of such a program as part of the solution strategy that is vital to secondary students' in making informed decisions regarding college, employment, and daily interactions with others.

Effective secondary character education must go beyond motivational posters and other trinkets to be relevant to secondary students (Romanowski, 2003; Martinson, 2003). Hence, the researcher has permission to administer the *Values in Action for Youth* (VIA) survey at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy Charter Secondary School in Florida. Preference was given to charter schools because charters have greater autonomy to implement innovative programs such as the VIA survey (Green III, Baker and Oluwole, 2013).

The students' instructor received professional development to enable her to successfully implement the secondary character education model used in the investigation. A training session was also provided for participants' parents. Moreover, the researcher completed a character education course at the University of Birmingham, England to validate expertise in effective secondary character education.

The convenient sample consisted of sixteen participants from 16 to 18 years of age at Maritime Academy. The participants were at risk students who failed one or more standardized exams. All were enrolled in a course at Maritime Academy for greater preparation of standardized tests. The independent variables include the juniors and seniors at Maritime Academy who took the VIA survey.

The dependent variables are the outcomes for the components of an effective secondary character education program and its impact on students' increased social skills as well as their knowledge and use of individual character strengths. Data analysis included a summative review for the components of the model used in this study; a Likert scale to determine participants' increased social skills and its corresponding regression to the mean according to participants' instructor's perception; and the VIA researcher's gender report on students' character strengths provided by the VIA Institute on Character.

Keywords: character education, social skills, charter school, VIA online youth survey

Order Number: _____

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Lynn University, 2015

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DEDICATION

It has been a journey to reach this point in my life but I could not have done it without my personal relationship with Jehovah, my family and friends.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Doris J. Harper, my first great teacher, and my father, Robert W. Bradford (deceased); my loving husband, Emilio and my precious son, Philip; my sister, Rochelle, my brothers, Robert and Donnell; all my nieces and nephews; the wonderful memories of Aunt Lillie and Aunt Bernice; and everyone who share the most endearing times at 1033 Cauldwell Avenue.

*“Happy is the person who finds wisdom and
the person who acquires discernment” – Proverbs 3:13.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and provide a rationale to implement an effective student centered secondary character education program that will (1) help secondary students identify their individual character strengths and use the components of secondary character education to reinforce those strengths; (2) address the needs of secondary students with respects to social skills; (3) provide the basis for an action research gender based mixed study; and (4) provide professional development by researcher to assist the students' instructor to scaffold students' identified character strengths into the core curriculum. The reason for this research is to validate the effectiveness of a secondary character education model that can be used in charter and traditional public secondary level schools.

It is hoped that by means of this study, the selected secondary students will use the character strengths identified in the character education program to increase their social skills. Parents of the participating students will also engage in a training session to explain the components of the secondary character education curriculum to enable these parents to know how they can reinforce the skills learned by the participants. Finally, the researcher will use the data collected and analyzed to validate the need for an effective secondary character education program in secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study is based on a consistent lack of effective secondary character education programs in secondary schools even though such programs are

linked with positive outcomes such as students' increased social skills, awareness and use of their character strengths, and increased academic achievement (Seligman et al., 2009; Graff, 2012). Leming, former president of Character Evaluation Associates, a firm specializing in the evaluation of character education programs reviewed three periods of active use of character education programs in the United States: (1) 1890 – 1940; (2) 1960 – 1980s; and (3) the current period. Prodigiously, Leming found a lack of secondary character education programs in secondary schools (James S. Leming, Ph.D., personal communication, November 21, 2014).

Researchers observed that effective secondary character education programs and social skills building are an urgent need (Christle, Jolivette and Nelson, 2007; Duckman and Seligman, 2005). This is true for secondary students who are proficient in content areas and for those who are not. To build social skills in secondary students, schools must go beyond elementary character education programs that emphasize a word for the month or a vision based on certain characteristic pillars (Seligman et al., 2009; Romanowski, 2005; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006). Rather, secondary students need character education programs that are personalized to the secondary students' social, intellectual and emotional needs that are common to this group during their teenage years. Effective secondary school character education programs that are embedded in the curriculum and are relevant to students' social, emotional and intellectual needs have had a positive impact on secondary students' increased social skills, reinforced their character strengths and increased academic achievement (Seligman et al, 2009; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006; Romanowski, 2005).

Research Questions

The researcher will focus on identifying the components of an effective secondary character education program and its impact on students' social skills and reinforcing their character strengths. The research questions are:

- (1) What are the components of a secondary character education program that makes it unique for secondary students?
- (2) What impact will the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

The research study is a mixed study design with more qualitative constituents than quantitative. Over a thirty-day period, the components of an effective secondary character education model will be identified. The model that will be used in this study is designed to help students increase their social skills and identify and use their character strengths. In contrast, elementary character education that focus on learning a pillar of words, coloring projects and corresponding songs would not be age appropriate for secondary students. Effective secondary character education has a substantial impact on secondary students such as their immediate and long-term decisions. Increased academic achievement and school engagement are some other benefits linked to secondary students who identify and use their character strengths.

Background

This study focuses on the need for effective secondary character education in secondary schools for secondary students as a group, and also addresses concerns for at risk secondary students to further support this need. Effective secondary character education programs for secondary students are a solution strategy that is sparingly used

in the United States as an effort to improve students' social skills and enable them to identify as well as use their character strengths (Romanowski, 2005; Williams et al., 2003). Researchers acknowledge that a majority of character education programs are geared toward elementary students and very few are directed to secondary schools (Williams et al., 2003). Such a trend may cause some to conclude that character education is primarily for elementary students. This appears to be a disservice to secondary students because researchers have found that some secondary schools that implemented effective character education programs have observed that students:

- (1) improved their social skills;
- (2) identified and used their character strengths
- (3) became more engaged in their course work;
- (4) took greater responsibility for their assignments;
- (5) in some cases, such programs were a better predictor of success in college than Intelligence Quotients or Scholastic Achievement Test scores (Seligman et al., 2009; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005).

Thus, secondary students as a group can benefit from effective secondary character education (Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006).

Secondary students that raise concern due to their salient needs may especially benefit from secondary character education programs. High dropout and low graduation rates, unprecedented mental health issues, cyber-bullying, and sexting are among some of the growing concerns for some secondary students (Hinduja and Patchin, 2013; Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaita and Rullo, 2013; Sojourner, 2012; Patterson, Hale and Stressman, 2007) Researchers also noted: "high dropout and low graduation rates have unfortunately become the norm in many urban high schools ... For many youth,

dropping out represents a final act of disengagement from school that began in the elementary grades” (Patterson et al., 2007, pp. 1-2). Another study (Christle et al., 2007) suggests that engaging students before they drop out of high school is complex but it is worth the effort to society. Secondary student dropouts become a societal issue because as adults, secondary dropouts are more likely to have health problems and diminished income that lead to an increased demand for social services. In addition, secondary student dropouts are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior such as crime which results in incarceration. Thus, it is to these secondary students’ and society’s advantage to assist them before they drop out of school with effective secondary character education (Christle et al., 2007).

National statistics support the researchers’ findings regarding the crisis of some secondary students. The national average for on time secondary school graduates for the 2010-2011 school-year was nearly 80 percent. However, the rates drop significantly for American Indian/Native Alaskan, Black and Hispanics groups to 65, 67, and 71 percent respectively (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, Stetser and Stillwell [Stetser and Stillwell], 2014). Therefore, in considering the far reaching benefits of assisting secondary students develop increased social skills and identify as well as use their character strengths, secondary schools could benefit from the solution strategy of effective secondary character education programs (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006).

There are key components to successful secondary character education programs. These programs include a curriculum that is relevant to secondary students’ social, emotional and intellectual needs, support from parents, and a school culture that

reinforces the character education program (Romanowski, 2005). Such an intensive program harmonizes with what the researchers suggest as age appropriate in meeting the needs and interests of secondary students and must go beyond motivational posters or signs, word for the week/month, and other trinkets to be meaningful and relevant to this group (Williams et al., 2003; Romanowski, 2003; and Martinson, 2003).

After reassessing the relevance of secondary academic programs, some schools have implemented secondary character education programs with positive results. Administrators, instructors and parents noticed that students became more engaged in their course work. Students also had improved relationship with their peers and adults as well as demonstrated greater responsibility for their learning. Students' social skills increased, and they identified as well as used their character strengths (Seligman et al., 2009; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005; Adams, 2013). Berkowitz and Bier (2007) provide additional details on the components of effective character education programs as noted in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1.

Character Education Program Components

Content Components
Explicit character education programs
Social and emotional curriculum
Academic curriculum integration
Pedagogical Components
Direct teaching strategies
Interactive teaching/learning strategies
Classroom/behavior management strategies
School-wide or institutional organization
Modeling/mentoring
Family/community participants
Community service/service learning
Professional development

Source: (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 40).

Framework

Character education has become more complex over the years and is supported by multiple theories (Williams, 2003). The theoretical framework for this research study is based partly on positive psychology because this theory has been effectively used in secondary character education programs to help secondary students identify and use their character strengths (Seligman et al., 2009). The researcher for this study will use a successfully proven instrument, the VIA youth survey which is associated with this theory (Seligman, 2011; Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). The goal is to help secondary students identify and use their character strengths so as to increase their social skills (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Gardner's work on multiple intelligences has also been applied to students. He stated: "Individuals may certainly demonstrate low levels of a particular intelligence, but, except in cases involving severe congenital or acquired brain damage, all individuals possess the full range of intelligences. ... [Although] individuals do demonstrate variation in their levels of strength and weakness across the intelligences" (as cited in Davis, Christodoulou, Seider and Gardner, n.d., p.8; Gardner, 2006). The instrument that will be used in this research study also helps students identify and use their character strength across a spectrum of various strengths.

Kohlberg discussed the stages of moral development of children as an augmentation of Jean Piaget theory (Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977). He favored emphasizing his points by using stories that involved moral dilemmas. Kohlberg used stories to open the dialogue on character development and this is one way that is recommended to help secondary students reason on issues related to secondary character education (Sanchez, 2006).

Operational Definitions

Baseline character education instrument: is an introductory instrument or tool used for implementing a character education program at its inception (Seligman et al., 2009).

Character education: “is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2005).

Social Skills: “are components of behavior that help an individual understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. ... Social skills can also be defined within the context of social and emotional learning — recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically” (Steadly, Schwartz, Levin and Luke, 2011).

Theoretical Framework for the Study: The theoretical framework for this secondary character education investigation centers on the theories for Kohlberg, Gardner, and Seligman. Kohlberg augmented Piaget thoughts on the stages of moral development (Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977; McLeod, 2011). Gardner has done significant work on multiple intelligences as applied to students (Gardner, 2006). Seligman’s work is closely related to character education programs and has also been successfully used with secondary students by encouraging them to identify

and frequently use their character strengths. Seligman is a leading expert in the field of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Values in Action for Youth (VIA): The VIA instrument is a self-report online youth survey. Students take the VIA survey in order to rank their character strengths out of 24 core values. Some of the core values include strengths such as kindness, gratitude, curiosity, leadership, bravery, perseverance, teamwork, and love of learning (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

Rationale for the Study

The study seeks to use an effective student centered secondary character education model that addresses the need for secondary students to identify their individual character strengths and increase their social skills. The secondary character education program will also be supported by the school administrator, students' instructor, parents and participants as a means to address the needs of secondary students with respects to social skills and their character strengths (Hinduja and Patchin, 2013; Strassberg et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2007; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005). The researcher will use the findings in this study to answer the questions regarding the components for an effective secondary character education model to help students increase their social skills and identify and use their character strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

There is a limited window of opportunity while students are in secondary school to help them build the social skills and identify as well as use their character strengths that will contribute to their ability to be productive members of society (Christle et al., 2007). Yet, the character education national movement has been overwhelmingly an

elementary and modestly, a middle school programs. Secondary character education is relatively rare — “at the very developmental stage when the need is arguably the greatest” (Lickona and Davidson, 2005, pp. xxii, 1). Secondary students are to some extent, a captive audience while they are still in school. Thus, effective secondary character education needs to be part of the solution strategy to assist secondary students succeed before they leave school.

The Instrument. The researcher will explore the need for character education in a secondary school by administering the *Values in Action Strengths for Youth* (VIA) online survey to secondary school students. VIA is a 96-question online survey that helps students identify their character strengths. Immediately after answering the survey’s questions, students submit their responses and are given the results. According to the *Youth Psychometric Data*, “VIA Survey is a psychometrically validated personality test that measures an individual’s character strengths.” VIA youth survey has good reliability where $\alpha > .70$ and “good reported construct validity” (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). An advantage with the VIA online survey is that the students’ answers to a 96-question survey are evaluated immediately when the student submits their responses online. A disadvantage of the VIA online survey is that it is an introductory or baseline character education instrument (Seligman et al., 2009). Thus, while the VIA instrument may be an effective foundation to a secondary character education program, it is not designed to serve as a complete program.

Setting. The researcher will select a secondary charter school as the setting for this study. The reasons for this choice are: (1) charter schools have greater flexibility to implement innovative programs; and (2) the principal of the charter school is given a wider authority by the charter school governing board to make decisions in the best

interests of the students and school (Florida State Department of Education, School Choice, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, Charter Schools Program, 2013). The State of Florida has given authority to the charter school's governing board as stated in the Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices Act (2014):

Each charter school's governing board must appoint a representative to facilitate parental involvement, provide access to information, assist parents and others with questions and concerns, and resolve disputes. The representative ... may be a governing board member, charter school employee, or individual contracted to represent the governing board.

These factors will greatly facilitate the researcher's ability to provide professional development to the principal and the students' instructor, administer the survey to participants in the study and subsequently, collect the data after the survey has been completed.

Assumptions for the Study

The infusion of effective character education at the secondary level will benefit secondary students to increase their social skills and identify and use their character strengths. The researcher has obtained permission from VIA Institute on Character to administer the VIA survey for this study (Appendix A). Based on the procedures outlined for this study, Riviera Beach Maritime Academy was selected as the secondary charter school for this study. The principal of Maritime Academy has full authority according to federal law and Florida State law as provided by the charter school governing board to invite the researcher to this school to administer the VIA online survey to specified students (Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices Act (2014) 2014 is date of the publication, not necessarily the date of the act).

Delimitations

This study is delimited to analyzing the 24 character strengths from the VIA survey with respects to increased social skill as indicated by the perception of the students' instructor (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman et al., 2009; see Appendix G). The research is a mixed study due to the qualitative analysis of the gender based results report from the VIA Institute on Character and quantitative analysis of the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" used in the study (Appendix G). It is out of the scope of this study to analyze data relating to students by name or any other code identifiers as well as classroom behavior such as the number of referrals, dismissals from class, reprimands, etc.

Summary

This section serves to outline the various aspects the researcher introduced regarding effective secondary character education for a mixed research study. The researcher seeks to investigate the impact of an effective secondary character education on secondary students' social skills and character strengths in order to provide a solution strategy to secondary schools that lack a secondary character education program. Although the information in this study applies to secondary students as a group, students whose performance raise concern may receive more benefits from secondary character education programs. There is a limited window of opportunity to assist secondary students with an effective secondary character education program while they are still in school.

Following Chapter I, Chapter II will report the literature review with respects to implementation of a baseline secondary character education program. Chapter III will discuss the methodology used for this research. Finally, Chapters IV and V will present the findings of the research study and conclusions respectively.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, the literature review will address effective secondary character education at the secondary school level. Character education gained momentum as a component to innovative school reform in the early 1990s. This was a watershed year for character education because interests in these programs became a bipartisan national issue for three reasons:

- (1) the Character Education Partnership was formed as an organization where multi-disciplinary national experts joined forces to study and promote school character education programs;
- (2) the Josephson Institution of Ethics developed national youth values into what has become Character Counts; and
- (3) President Clinton secured bipartisan support to pass legislation and fund character education research. Under the first three years of President George W. Bush, Congress funding for character education soared to \$24 billion.

Consequently, investing in the socialization of America's youth became an essential element to societal progress and survival (Berkowitz and Hoppe, 2009; Davis, 2006).

While many schools readily saw character education as a program suitable for elementary students, the same could not be said for secondary students. Leming, former president of Character Evaluation Associates, a firm specializing in the evaluation of character education programs, and former Carl A. Gerstacker Chair in Education at Saginaw Valley State University reviewed three periods of active use of character education programs: (1) 1890 – 1940; (2) 1960 – 1980s; and (3) the current character education emphasis. Overwhelmingly, Leming found a lack of secondary character

education programs in secondary schools (James S. Leming, Ph.D., personal communication, November 21, 2014). Yet, research studies make it apparent that secondary character education provides additional opportunities for secondary students to increase social skills and identify and use their character strengths (Seligman et al., 2009; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006).

In addition, a two-year study under the direction of national experts “comprised of academics and practitioners with expertise in adolescent development, high school education, or character education” reported:

[The character education national] movement has been overwhelmingly an elementary school phenomenon, with modest progress at the middle school level. By contrast, intentional, school-wide attention to character education in high schools is relatively rare—at the very developmental stage when the need is arguably the greatest ... For several compelling reasons—to develop the positive intellectual and ethical potential of adolescents, reduce negative teen behaviors that injure self and others, and create safe, caring, and effective schools—high schools must embrace educating for character as central to their mission. Currently, it [secondary character education] is the missing link” (Lickona and Davidson, 2005, pp. xxii, 1).

While research suggests that secondary character education programs in secondary schools can be effective to help students identify and use their individual character strengths and increase social skills, the programs must go beyond motivational posters or signs, word for the week, and other trinkets to be meaningful and relevant (Seligman et al., 2009; Milliren and Messer, 2009; Romanowski, 2003; Martinson, 2003). After reassessing the relevance of secondary education programs,

some schools have implemented effective secondary character education programs with positive results. Administrators, instructors and parents noticed that students became more engaged in their course work. Students also had improved relationship with their peers and adults as well as demonstrated greater responsibility for their learning. Students' social skills increased and they identified and used their character strengths. In some cases, effective secondary character education programs were a better predictor of success in college than Intelligence Quotients or Scholastic Achievement Test scores (Seligman et al., 2009; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005; Adams, 2013).

One study of an effective secondary character education program reported: "Every teacher interviewed agreed that the CEP [character education program] expanded the minds of students by placing situations into an ethical context and raising character issues in student and adult behavior. ... all teachers viewed this increased awareness as an important and effective element of the CEP" (Romanowski, 2005, p. 10). It is plausible therefore, that some schools turn to secondary character education as a solution strategy to help secondary students while they are still in school.

Although secondary students as a group benefit from secondary character education, secondary students at risk raise deeper concern (Christle et al., 2007; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005). The reasons why secondary students at risk cause greater concern are due to the social woes these students experienced that include high dropout and low graduation rates, cyber-bullying, growing incidences of mental health issues, increased level of teen violence, and the academic gap with their peers (Strassberg et al., 2013; Sojourner, 2012; Seligman et al., 2009; Roderick, Nagaoka and Coca, 2009; Patterson, Hale and Stressman, 2007; Davis, 2006). Researchers, Christle

et al. (2007, p. 334) concluded that “high schools need to ... reassess the relevance of all educational programs to reflect students’ current and longer-term social ... interests to continually promote school engagement”

Studies of national statistics validate the concern expressed by researchers for some of the nation’s secondary students. For the 2012-2013 school year, the proficiency rate at or above in math was 26 percent and in English it was 38 percent. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Mathematics and Reading, 2014). Although a growing number of students aspire to matriculate college, college readiness still remains an issue for many secondary students. One source reported that of all the secondary student graduates tested in 2013, only “26 percent ... met all four of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks indicating academic readiness for credit-bearing first-year college courses” (ACT, Inc., 2014, p.16). Finally, the on time graduation rate for American Indian/Native Alaskan, Black and Hispanics is 65, 67, and 71 percent respectively, while the national average hovers around 80 percent (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, Stetser and Stillwell [Stetser and Stillwell], 2014).

Given the need for effective secondary character education, how does one determine the components of a successful secondary character education program? Administrators and faculty must determine the outcome variables that are needed for their secondary students and then, available secondary character education programs must be researched for those with specific proven outcomes for secondary students (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007). One study investigated 33 effective character education programs for the most frequent outcome variables that were associated across these

character education programs (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; see Table 2.1). It is also important to research the elements of the character education program to ascertain its design or structure including which instruments will be used (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; see Table 2.2). Next are the pedagogical strategies that are necessary to implement a successful program (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; see Table 2.3). Professional development should gauge whether the secondary character education program is limited to a class or is a school-wide effort character education program. Both approaches have been effective although some researchers favor school-wide (Berkowitz, 2011; Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; Williams et al., 2003).

Researcher, Davis (2006, pp. 13-14) observed: “Teaching ... character education in a way that is not over the students’ heads at least supplements more theoretical and philosophical methods. ... The important thing is that teachers in the public schools take seriously the responsibility to teach ... their students. With this basic commitment in place, working out a successful program will follow.” Thus, Davis (2006) suggested that one key component of successfully implementing character education is for teachers to earnestly commit to provide such instructions to their students.

Having established a suitable character education program, secondary schools can turn attention to specific instruments that support the program. One effective instrument for secondary character education is storytelling as it relates to course content. Some instructors claim that there isn’t enough time in the day to teach character education. Yet, storytelling can be embedded in content. Consider a secondary school social studies class that is discussing the United States involvement in World War II (Sanchez, 2006; Sanchez and Stewart, 2006).

Table 2.1.*Highest Percentage of Tests for Significantly Positive Outcome Variables*

Sexual behavior	Communicative competency
Character knowledge	Attitude toward teachers
Socio-moral cognition	Violence and aggression
Problem solving skills	Drug use
Emotional competency	Personal morality
Relationships	Knowledge/attitudes about risk
Attachment to school	School behavior
Academic achievement	Pro-social behavior and attitudes

Source: (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 39).

Table 2.2.*Effective Character Education Program Elements***Content Elements**

Explicit character education programs

Social and emotional curriculum

Academic curriculum integration

Pedagogical Elements

Direct teaching strategies

Interactive teaching/learning strategies

Classroom/behavior management strategies

School-wide or institutional organization

Modeling/mentoring

Family/community participants

Community service/service learning

Professional development

Source: (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 40).

Table 2.3.*Strategies for Character Education Implementation*

Peer interactive strategies	School-wide character focus
Cooperative learning	Family/community involvement
Moral dilemma discussion	High expectations
Service to others	Pedagogy of empowerment
Developmental discipline	Teaching about character
Role-modeling and mentoring	Teaching social-emotional competencies
Nurturance	Induction
Trust and trustworthiness	Professional development

Source: (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 154).

Beyond simply mentioning that the U.S. ended WWII by dropping two atom bombs on Japan in 1945, a discussion of character and values can be useful. This is especially true since Vice President Truman unexpectedly inherited the office of President of the United States in April of 1945 after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. There was no question that Truman could not supersede Roosevelt as president. Yet, Truman had a brash character and the stance that dictated: “The buck stops here” (Sanchez, 2006, p. 63). As Commander in Chief, President Truman bore the weight of American casualties of war. Would he extend the war by means of a hand to hand combat with Japan and risk additional American casualties? Or would he do what many would find amoral and use the only two atom bombs remaining in the U.S. arsenal against Japan? Note the use of storytelling regarding Truman’s response: If the atom bombs yielded an effective Japanese response, the war would be over quickly and many American soldiers’ lives of great value to Truman and the American people

would be spared. Hence, while keeping the communication lines open with Japan on unconditional surrender and without warning, on August 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Immediately, 80,000 people were killed and tens of thousands survived with the pangs of radiation exposure. Still there was no surrender by Japan. Three days later, August 9, 1945 the second and final atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki with unprecedented destruction. Four days later, Japan surrendered under Allied terms. President Truman, the first and only president to drop the atom bomb is said to have prayed that he would never have to make that decision again. However, if such a decision was necessary, despite the known repercussions, Truman said he would do it again (Sanchez, 2006). Thus, one may ask:

- What type of character strengths did President Truman need as Commander in Chief during the Japanese crisis?
- What can be said about President Truman's values as Commander in Chief?

It should now be apparent how this momentous period can raise a vivid lesson on secondary character education and values through storytelling (Sanchez, 2006).

Although a number of researchers recommend a direct strategy, sometimes, secondary character education is the result of a serendipitous effect (Berkowitz, 2011; Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; Williams et al., 2003). One unique secondary school program designed a course entitled "Unified Studies" where years later, graduates related that the course helped them with character development and being better prepared for college (Williams et al., 2003). The purpose of the course was simply to help juniors and seniors experience "the joy of learning" (Williams et al., 2003, p. 5). The Unified Studies course was an integration of core subjects explored through experimental activities both in and out of the classroom. Students applied to the program and a cross-section of the student

body was selected from at risk to advanced placement students. Over a year, the class met every other day for the entire day. The aim was to use various pedagogical strategies that incorporated small group cooperative learning and a high application of real life experiences that occurred in and out of school. In this way, instructors taught students so that their whole lives were affected and in order to encourage students to become life-long learners. This structure afforded instructors the flexibility to allow the participants to go into greater depth during discussions, and take advantage of field trips that further enhanced learning (Williams et al., 2003).

Fear and grades were not used as a means to motivate students. Students were taught how to learn by exploring unfamiliar areas such as nature. As a result, students gain the confidence to expand their knowledge base while learning to clarify their values and strengthen their character development. For example, integral relationships were built between peers, students and teachers as well as the student and her environment. Also, as instructors participated in the program, they grew in their confidence that student education is not limited to telling students what they need to learn but rather, creating real life experiences through modeling for students to learn instruction. Hence, instructors in the Unified Studies program discovered that living examples that are relevant to secondary students can be a very effective teaching method (Williams et al., 2003).

Teaching in the Unified Studies course required professional development for instructors. Instructors also had to be creative when they made their lesson plans. Sometimes instructors had to be responsive quickly to unexpected opportunities to maximize student learning. The instructors recall one morning learning that Rosa Parks was going to speak at a nearby university and thought what an excellent opportunity for

the students to directly hear from Parks. Within less than an hour, the instructors were able to arrange administrative permission with their school and the university as well as transportation. After briefing students on Rosa Park's biography, they went on a meaningful field trip to hear Parks' story first hand.

Students remember their learning experiences in the Unified Studies course many years after graduating. They easily recalled what they learned on specific days and during activities. The course work was personalized to their needs. Reading some of the students' describe their experience in the Unified Studies course reveals just how meaningful the course was to secondary students. Consider the following:

1. "[The teachers] had a big, big impact on my life. I really was just about to pack in school; I hated school. I hated it with a passion, but they turned it around for me [because] they accepted me as I was..." (p. 14).
2. "Very real life experience. It was not textbook learning. The [day we shared our resumes and interviewed with real employers] was a great experience. We talked to them one on one. Had to think and write. I have some good memories..." (pp. 15-16).
3. "I had flunked out of the entire tenth grade pretty much when they took me in, and it turned me around a lot. My grades went up considerably, and all of a sudden I had the urge to try and graduate" (p. 18).
4. "I think it makes you work hard and not give up. When you set out to do something you finish it. *Unified* taught a lot of good things like endurance. A lot of things we did weren't easy" (p. 19) [italics added].
5. "*Unified* was ahead of its time. ... it teaches you how to learn and how to educate yourself rather than [depend on] the lecture and regurgitate

[information as] many students are used to. ... The program worked well with those that struggle, but it is also an academic class” (Williams et al., 2003, p. 23) [italics added].

The researchers (Williams et al., 2003) observed that the results from the Unified Studies course indicate that secondary character education emerged from a program that guided students’ interactions with other students under the facility of caring and conscientious instructors. Consider:

“Teenagers need to feel that value lessons emerge naturally from real experiences and that they have a part in discovering these lessons for themselves. ... Unified Studies provided a high-involvement learning atmosphere by inviting students to participate in all the subject matter taught ... Students gained character by sticking to and working through problems, being part of a team, living up to their responsibilities, fairly and honestly performing their work, and helping others, as well as being helped” (Williams et al., 2003, pp. 24-25).

This study described a practical approach to a secondary character education program (Williams et al., 2003). As concluding recommendations to faculty desiring to implement a similar program, the researchers suggest that instructors recognize the need secondary character education as well as academic programs that allow students to develop in creative ways. The researchers also recommended that instructors build on moments that occur naturally and make learning a joy as they seek to build secondary character. This means that instructors become cognizant of how to take advantage of structured and unstructured time. It is also necessary for instructors to believe in students as they seek ways to make students take responsibility.

In a different study, the Strath Haven Positive Psychology for Youth Project (Strath Haven study), researchers Seligman et al., (2009) received a \$2.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to complete a two year randomized study with 347 grade nine language arts students that were assigned to classes that either contained the treated curriculum or did not have the treatment. This was the first empirical study of a positive psychology curriculum for adolescents. The sample consisted of students on both the honor and non-honor tracks. The major goal of the study was two-fold: (1) help students learn more about themselves by identifying their character strengths and using them by means of the VIA online survey instrument; and (2) encourage students to further increase their character strengths by using them daily. “Most lessons involve the discussion of character strengths ... as an in-class activity, a real-world homework activity that encourage students to apply concepts and skills in their own lives, and [maintain] a follow-up journal [of] reflection” (p. 301).

The findings of the Strath Haven study suggest that ninth grade students who received the character education were more engaged in learning, had greater satisfaction in school, and increased achievement (Seligman et al., 2009; see Figure 2.1). These students also improved in their social skills according to parents’ and teachers’ perceptions (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). It is noteworthy that the teachers who completed the students’ measures did not teach the character education curriculum and were blind with respects to whether the students were part of the group that received the treatment or the group that did not receive the treatment. Further, non-honor students’ increased academic achievement in Language Arts was evident through the eleventh grade (Seligman et al., 2009).

The Strath Haven study is significant primarily for two reasons. First, frequently, schools determine that students need character development or social education in addition to academic programs. Educators as well as others observe that such programming is necessary in order for students to be successful not only in school but as contributors to society (Tough, 2012; Battistich, 2003). Second, character education programs have been shown to provide a guidepost for students to improve social skills and identify as well as use their character strengths that support student engagement in learning (Seligman et al., 2009; Berkowitz, 2011). Therefore, the results of the Strath Haven study may increase secondary schools' awareness of the need for secondary character education as a solution strategy to improve social skills for their students and help them identify and use their character strengths.

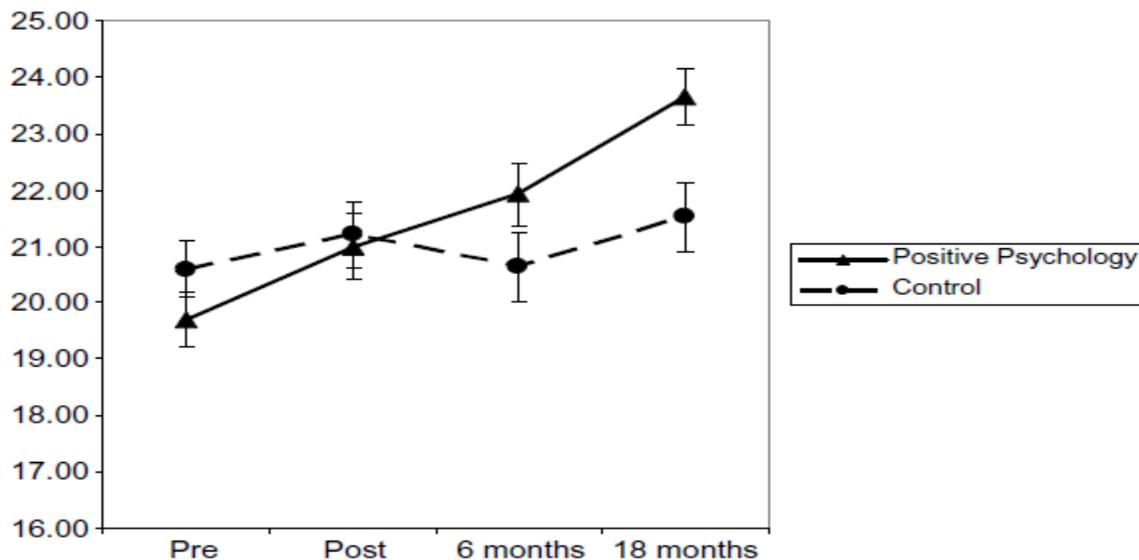


Figure 2.1.

Learning Strengths as Reported by Teachers.

Source: (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 302).

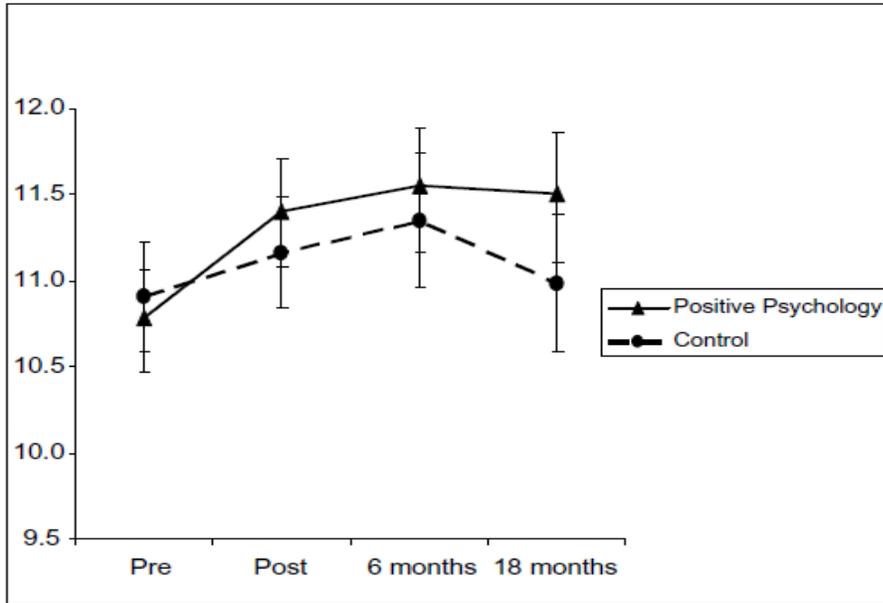


Figure 2.2.

Adolescents' Cooperation as Reported by Mothers.

Source: (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 302).

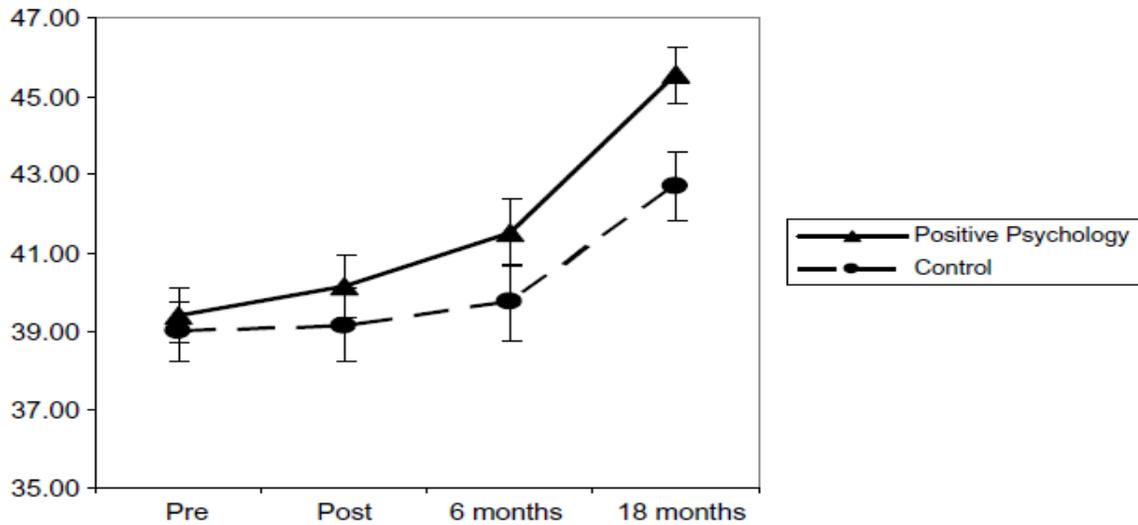


Figure 2.3.

Social Skills as Reported by Instructors.

Source: (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 303).

Summary

Secondary character education is a solution strategy for secondary students as a group because it has the potential to increase social skills and enable students to identify and use their character strengths (Berkowitz, 2011; Seligman et al., 2009). The relevance of this literature review is connected to helping secondary students to build a foundation for increased social skills as well as identify and use of their character strengths through secondary character education that will be sustained in the future. This is important because today's secondary students will compose the mosaic of our society. Yet, few secondary schools implement effective secondary character education programs (James S. Leming, Ph.D., personal communication, November 21, 2014).

While the literature supports that there is some flexibility in selecting the type of secondary character education program, the program must be based on the needs of the secondary students being served to be effective (Williams et al., 2003; Berkowitz, 2011). Researchers, Berkowitz and Bier (2007) report that there is a plethora of character education programs on the market and therefore, school administrators must investigate available research in order to determine at a minimum:

1. how well the program matches their students' needs
2. what are the proven outcomes for secondary students who used the program
3. how the program will be structured and what instruments will be used
4. the level of integration into curriculum or academic content
5. the necessity of involving stakeholders in the community including parents
6. professional development

Although this research is focused on effective secondary character education for secondary students as a group, the researcher acknowledges the salient needs of at risk

secondary students (Patterson et al., 2007; Christle et al., 2007; NCES, Mathematics and Reading, 2014; Stetser and Steller, 2014; ACT Inc., 2014). As a result, at risk secondary students may benefit from secondary character programs especially during the limited time that they are in secondary school.

There are various means that can be used to implement effective secondary character education in secondary schools in order to increase social skills such as helping students learn and use their character strengths and scaffolding these strengths through storytelling (Seligman et al., 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Sanchez and Stewart, 2006). Storytelling has the advantage of being used across contents and scaffold in the curriculum (Sanchez, 2006; Sanchez and Stewart, 2006). Also, some secondary schools may prefer secondary character education by using programs such as Unified Studies (Williams et al., 2003). Finally, the VIA instrument has had success with various groups of secondary students and is likely a strong baseline character strengths instrument to introduce character education in secondary schools (Peterson and Park, 2009; Seligman et al., 2009; Seligman, 2011; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Despite the overall benefits of secondary character education, the researcher recognizes the need for caution with some students where they and/or their families uphold different principles and mores (Newman, 2012). To teach secondary character education to secondary students is to assume that students are liberal choosers and the unencumbered self would permit such education. A liberal chooser is one who can choose between lifestyles, mores and values, independent of social influence; and the unencumbered self is the inner person that grows and becomes the individual not in a vacuum as if separated from the person's social environment (Newman, 2012).

Not all students and their families are liberal choosers. In *Wisconsin vs. Yoder* (1972), the U.S. Supreme Court held that Amish are insular in their lifestyle and lack political ambition and have the right not to live as liberal choosers. The Court further stated:

Amish families [should be allowed to] withdraw their children from public schools after the eighth grade – two years earlier than state law permitted – in order to minimize exposure to “worldly” values that might increase attrition rates among Amish youth.

Thus, it should be acknowledged that some students may not respond positively to all phases of secondary character education due to their right of the unencumbered self as opposed to the liberal chooser (Newman, 2012).

The fact that not all students may participate in secondary character education should not deter educators from pursuing character education in secondary schools. This is because the benefits to students that participate in secondary character education programs may outweigh the choice other students make to refrain from participation. In addition, educators should not expect a linear response to participation in secondary character education no more than secondary students demonstrate a linear response to the range of character strengths or to multiple intelligences associated with the theories of Seligman and Gardner respectively (Seligman, 2011; Gardner, 2006). Moreover, Kohlberg wrote about the *stages* of moral development (Kohlberg and Hersch, 1997, McLeod, 2011). Thus, some flexibility is necessary in order to accommodate all secondary students.

Chapters I and II have provided introduction and literature review for this study. Chapter III presents the methodology that will be utilized in this study. Chapter IV will explain the results, and Chapter V will interpret those results into the conclusion.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research will be to validate and implement a student centered secondary character education program that will help secondary students: (1) identify their character strengths; and (2) serve as one of the means to increase social skills. The study is designed to research whether the secondary character education program used in this investigation will be effective for secondary school students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and provide a rationale to implement an effective student centered secondary character education program that will (1) help secondary students identify their individual character strengths and use the components of secondary character education to reinforce those strengths; (2) address the needs of secondary students with respects to social skills; (3) provide the basis for an action research gender based mixed study; and (4) provide professional development by researcher to assist the students' instructor to scaffold students' identified character strengths into the core curriculum (see Appendix H). The reason for this research is to validate the effectiveness of a secondary character education program model that can be used in charter and traditional public secondary level schools.

It is hoped that by means of this study, the selected secondary students will use the character strengths identified in the character education program to increase their social skills. Parents of the participating students will also be provided a training session to explain the components of the secondary character education curriculum to enable these parents to know how they can reinforce the skills learned by the participants.

Finally, the researcher will use the data collected and analyzed to validate the need for an effective secondary character education program in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The researcher will focus on identifying the components of an effective secondary character education program and its impact on students' social skills and reinforcing their character strengths. The research questions are:

- (3) What are the components of a secondary character education program that makes it unique for secondary students?
- (4) What impact will the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

The research study is a mixed study design with more qualitative constituents than quantitative. Over a thirty-day period, the components of an effective secondary character education model will be identified. The model that will be used in this study is designed to help students increase their social skills and identify and use their character strengths. In contrast, elementary character education that focus on learning a pillar of words, coloring projects and corresponding songs would not be age appropriate for secondary students. Effective secondary character education has a substantial impact on secondary students such as their immediate and long-term decisions. Increased academic achievement and school engagement are some other benefits linked to secondary students who identify and use their character strengths.

The following discusses how the research questions are linked to the variables used in this study:

- Research question one is qualitative. The following variables will be examined for this question: components of secondary character education; professional development; parents' training session; summative review; and the VIA online youth survey researcher's report. This gender based report will rank the twenty-four character strengths from strong to weak for each participant. The pedagogical components of the secondary character education program will include qualitative data such as teaching strategies, modeling, mentoring, family support, and classroom management strategy whereas the content components are character strengths, social skills and academic curriculum integration or scaffolding (see Appendix H).
- The second research question examines students' social skills and their individual character strengths. The "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement," an instrument used to measure students' social skills is the variable that will be used for the quantitative data to answer this question. The instrument is written on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = regressed; 2 = stayed the same; 3 = average; 4 = improved slightly; and 5 = improved greatly. This instrument will provide twenty-three different scores as the students' instructor will use it to assess each student (see Appendix G).
- The researcher's report and the students' instructor's report from the VIA Institute on Character are the variables that will primarily be used to answer the qualitative segment of research question two on character strengths.
- Other variables studied for social skills are VIA online survey, participants treated with the VIA survey since the survey is built around character strengths.

Further, scaffolding character strengths positively impacts student learning of social skills and character strengths.

Variables

The following are operational definitions used for the independent variables used in this study:

- *Components of secondary character education*: “direct teaching strategies; interactive teaching/learning strategies; classroom/behavior management strategies; school-wide or institutional organization; modeling/mentoring; family/community participants; community service/service learning; professional development” (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 40). This item will be linked to the first research question that addresses components of secondary character education.
- *Extent of parental and school administrator support*: Speaking with participants about their character strengths and encouraging them to use their identified character strengths at home, in school, and with friends as established by the summative review. Research question one is linked to this variable.
- *Parents’ training sessions*: These are workshops to help parents become aware of the scope of this research study and how they can assist their child to use his identified character strengths. Examination of this variable will support the first research question (see Appendix E, E2)
- *Participants treated with the VIA survey*: Secondary charter school students that take the online VIA survey. The VIA instrument is a self-report online youth survey. Students take the VIA survey in order to rank their character strengths

out of 24 core values. Some of the core values include items such as kindness, gratitude, curiosity, leadership, bravery, perseverance, teamwork, and love of learning (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Character strengths are closely tied to social skills that are addressed in the second research question.

- *Participants' gender*: male and female. All data collection and analysis for the research questions will be by gender only.
- *“Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement:”* An instrument used to measure social skills (see Appendix G). This instrument will be used to record the score for students' social skills and relates to research question two.
- *Professional development*: “activities to enhance professional career growth. Such activities may include individual development, continuing education, and in-service education, as well as curriculum writing, peer collaboration, study groups, and peer coaching or mentoring (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.; see Appendix E, E1).
- *Social skills*: “are components of behavior that help an individual understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. ... Social skills can also be defined within the context of social and emotional learning — recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically” (Steedly et al., 2011).
- *Students' instructor's methods of scaffolding character strengths*: various ways to embed the character strengths in the curriculum such as: storytelling;

modeling; group and one-on-one discussions; reading and writing assignments; project base learning; and community service (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). The different methods used to scaffold character strengths is one way to increase learning, and thus, impact students' social skills that is related to research question two.

- *Summative review*: This evaluation “seeks to examine the effects or outcomes of an object by describing what happens after the delivery of the program” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 14). The summative review will be used to evaluate the components of the secondary character education program that is associated with research question one.
- *VIA online youth survey*: character strengths survey administered to secondary charter school students (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). The character strengths youth survey relates most to research question two on social skills.
- *VIA online youth survey – researcher’s report*: A gender based report generated by the survey makers that ranks the character strengths for all participants (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). This report is used primarily in research question one.

The dependent variables will be the outcomes based of the researcher’s VIA Institute of Character report on participants by gender and the outcomes for all research questions. The outcomes for all the research questions will be directly linked to each corresponding research question; whereas the VIA Institute of Character researcher’s reports relates most to character strength and the “Post

Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement” to social skills for research question two (See Appendix G).

Setting

This study will be conducted at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy Charter High School (Maritime Academy) located in the city of Riviera Beach in the School District of Palm Beach County, Florida. It is a coed school with 135 students that are in grades 9 through 12 ((Tonya Hicks-Brown, M.S., personal communication, April 17, 2015). Of that total number of students, 71 percent are male and 29 percent are female. The diversity of the student body consists of 74 percent White; 12 percent Hispanic; 10 percent Black; and 4 percent Other. Forty-two percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch (Florida State, Department of Education, 2012). This setting was selected because the students participating in this study are at risk students that have failed one or more standardized test required for graduation. Hence, before the participants leave secondary school, the researcher will answer whether pairing an academic course with an effective secondary character education program helps students to identify and use their character strengths and develop increased social skills.

Sample Selection

This is a convenient sample that consists of twenty-three participants that range from 16 to 18 years of age. Essential characteristics that must be included are: (1) the participants are secondary charter school students of male and female gender; (2) all participants must speak and read English; (3) all participants are in a course where the instructor will scaffold the character strengths into the curriculum; and (4) the researcher will provide professional development for students’ instructor and training

sessions for their parents. The exclusion criteria are: (1) students who are not in secondary charter schools; (2) principal and students' instructor who do not want a secondary character education program; (3) schools that already have a secondary character education program; and (4) non-English speaking students.

The participants for this study are secondary students at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy. The sample was selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria met by the secondary students in this group of English speaking males and females. Their school does not have a secondary character education program and the principal and students' instructor support having such a program in their school. Further, the principal and the students' instructor are supportive of professional development for the students' instructor as well as involving parents. The rationale in selecting this sample is that coupling secondary character education with an academic coursework provides the platform that these secondary students need to identify and use their character strengths and to increase their social skills.

Instrumentation

The *Values in Action for Youth* online survey is the instrument that will be used for this study and does not need to be modified. It is linked to positive psychologist Seligman's, work on using character strengths in education, a component of the theoretical framework. The researcher has received a letter from VIA Institute on Character granting permission for the VIA survey to be used for this research. According to the *Youth Psychometric Data*, "VIA Survey is a psychometrically validated personality test that measures an individual's character strengths." VIA youth survey has good reliability where $\alpha > .70$ (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman 2004). VIA survey is also an effective character education instrument because it can be

useful to help students know themselves better, enhance self-esteem and potentially improve student learning gains (Peterson and Park, 2009). Some of the statements from the survey that students are asked to give responses to are (1) “I stick up for other kids who are being treated unfairly;” and (2) “I like to think of different ways to solve problems” (Peterson and Park, 2009). Use of this survey is without cost to the students, their parents or the school.

One advantage of incorporating VIA as part of the procedures for implementation of a character education program is that the students’ results to a 96-multiple choice question survey are provided online immediately after completing the survey. The students’ responses are evaluated and ranked according to character strengths immediately by VIA Institute on Character when students submit their responses online. VIA Institute on Character provides two confidential reports that summarize the students’ results: (1) by gender and (2) by gender and student identifier codes. The researcher’s report of the survey will be classified by gender only whereas the instructor’s report will be classified by students’ identifier codes that the instructor generated and were used by each student during registration for the survey (Peterson and Park, 2009).

A disadvantage to the VIA online survey is that it is an introductory or a baseline instrument for character education. Schools who are seeking a robust character education program could initially use the VIA online survey but then should supplement their program with other instrument(s). Therefore, while the VIA survey is useful to starting character education in secondary schools, it is not designed to be used as the sole instrument of such a program (Peterson and Park, 2009).

Procedures for actual day of VIA survey administration.

After students arrive to computer lab, researcher and students' instructor will remain in the computer lab until the students leave the computer lab. At the time of arrival, the researcher will reaffirm with students' instructor that all students know their code identifiers and that the instructor has the list in case a student(s) forget their code identifier. After the instructions have been read by the researcher, students will be instructed to go to the VIA registration screen using the website written on the board. The survey consists of 96 multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. There is no right or wrong answer. The survey is designed to help students know themselves better. All students will receive an online personalized report of their character strengths within three minutes or less after submitting their responses to the VIA survey.

Students will be instructed to sit quietly and review their character strengths until everyone completes the survey. Immediately after all students complete the survey, the researcher will provide each student with a handout that explains all character strengths and a discussion will follow to answer any questions the students may have (see Appendix D, D2).

Expectations of participants in the secondary character program will include reminders and support from the school's principal, students' instructor and their parents who will all have professional development or training provided by the researcher to use the character strengths in school, with friends, and at home with their family. After the discussion, the researcher will encourage the participants to use their identified character strengths in school and at home with family and friends. The participants will also be informed that routinely, they will be asked to identify one or

more core character strengths that relates to the content of the curriculum taught by their instructor. At that time, the students' instructor will elaborate on students' responses (see Appendix D, D2). This concludes the VIA survey administration.

Research Method

The research investigation is a mixed study for primarily two reasons: (1) a qualitative analysis of the components of a secondary character education program and the students' character strengths will be conducted by gender; and (2) a Likert scale will be used to make a quantitative assessment of students' social skills from the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" (see Appendix G). The theoretical framework of the study is positive psychology as adopted in education; moral development explained by Kohlberg; and Gardner's multiple intelligences (Seligman et al., 2009; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977; Gardner, 2006). The researcher will analyze the data from a gender based report of the participants' character strengths from the maker of the VIA survey instrument used in the study (Peterson and Park, 2009).

As a mixed method study, the qualitative and quantitative components will be used independently (see Figure 1).

Evaluation of Research Methods

The researcher will take several steps to establish trustworthiness and minimize threats to validity for the quantitative and qualitative methodologies used in this study. For the qualitative methodology, the researcher will use standardized conditions for administering the VIA online survey. The researcher will read the same script for instructions prior to administering the survey to participants. Also the location for

participants to take the survey will be the computer lab at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy for all administrations. Moreover, the VIA online survey makers will generate the character strengths report for participants, instructor, and researcher. Finally, the researcher will meet with the students' instructor to obtain information about students' use of their character strengths and which components of secondary character education were most effective with the participants. This approach will minimize threats to validity for the qualitative methodology in this study by standardizing location, instrumentation, testing conditions or implementation, and mortality.

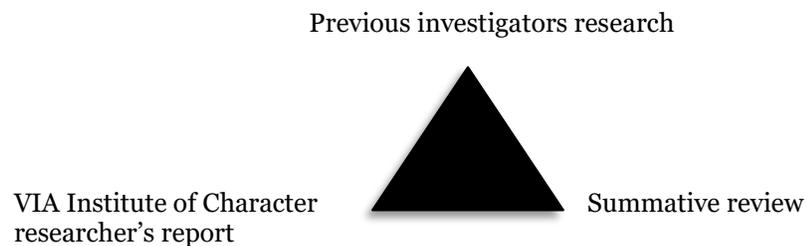
Regarding the quantitative methodology used in this investigation, the researcher will use the technique of obtaining more information on the participants. The researcher will achieve this by meeting with the students' instructor to discuss the instructor's perception using a Likert scale on students' performance of social skills (see Appendix G). This direct meeting will minimize threats to validity such as mortality and maturation for the quantitative methodology. Finally, since this study is a one-group design, selection is not a threat to validity to either quantitative or qualitative methodologies.

Data Collection Techniques

The researcher will obtain permission (1) from participants, their parents, the school's principal and its governing board; and (2) from the Institutional Review Board for Lynn University (see Appendices B, B1 and B2; C, C1, C2 and C3). Subsequently, the researcher will provide professional development for students' instructor in understanding character strengths, modeling, use of the Bruner's Spiral Curriculum model and ways to scaffold character strengths in the curriculum (see Appendices E, E1; N). The Bruner's Spiral Curriculum model gives students an opportunity to gather and

practice knowledge. Then, when students are confronted with new experiences, they reflect on how they can apply what they know in new ways. In this manner, students continue to grow and develop their character strengths and social skills. Scaffolding instruction “refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process” (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). As a result, scaffolding character strengths into the curriculum is correlated to increased social skills since this will help students understand the character strengths more.

Research question one: What are the components of a secondary character education program that make it unique for secondary students?



Research questions two: What impact will the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

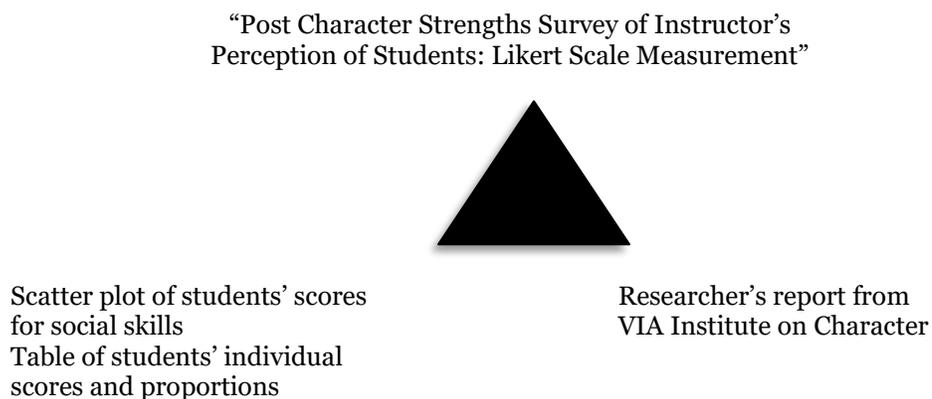


Figure 3.1.

Triangulation for Research Questions One and Two.

The researcher will also communicate by email or telephone with students' instructor at least once a week for approximately four weeks after the subjects complete the VIA survey to determine the impact of various aspects of secondary character education such as: (a) the students' use of their identified character strengths and instructor's perception of increased social skills; (b) parents communication with students' instructor about the character education program and if they have any questions; (c) address any weaknesses that may impede students' progress in the secondary character education program that have been identified by students, parents or students' instructor; and (d) determine the support for the secondary character education program by the school principal or other school administrator.

Approximately thirty days after participants have completed the VIA online survey, the researcher will meet with the students' instructors to gather data on the students' scores with respects to increased social skills using the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" that uses a scale from (1) to (5) where (1) = regressed and (5) = improved greatly for a possible total of five points (see Appendix G). The researcher will record scores for each student on individual sheets that have been numbered from 1 to 23 and include the students' gender.

Data collection from the following sources will be used to determine the effectiveness of the secondary character education model used in this research study: (a) the facility of the secondary character education program used in the study to provide the key components to secondary character education; and (b) collect the score of each student for social skills using the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis Procedures

The first research question will be answered primarily by three different variables in this study: components of secondary character education, the VIA online survey researcher's report, and the summative review. The summative review will be comprehensive because it will examine other variables in the study for: (1) intended and unintended outcomes; and (2) any weaknesses and strengths in the secondary character education model. For example, the summative review will consider whether the professional development and parents' training sessions were significantly helpful, adequate or not helpful. The summative review will also examine the secondary character education components such as parental support; the pedagogical methods and frequency used by instructor to encourage students to use their identified character strengths; the pedagogical methods and frequency used by instructors to scaffold the 24 core strengths into the curriculum; ordering into different formats the researcher's report of participants' character strengths based on data from the VIA Institute on Character; administrative support; and implementation process of the VIA survey for all days.

Further, to assist the students' instructor, the researcher will analyze the data in the VIA Institute on Character researcher's report into meaningful formats or separate tables for: (1) the first and last character strengths for all male students; and (2) the first and last character strengths for all female students. This analysis may reveal trends and salient factors such as which character strength was strongest or weakest for the participants as a group and by gender.

Research question two will be answered using the variable: "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement"

that measures social skills according to the students' instructor's perception (see Appendix G). The analysis of data collected from the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" will be used by the researcher as follows: (1) set up a frequency table with the individual score for each participant under the headings of: *Social Skills* to determine the number of students scoring ≥ 3 to 5 which is equivalent to average improvement to improved greatly on the Likert scale used in this study; (2) determine the percentage of students scoring ≥ 3 ; (3) determine a table of proportions for each participant's total score listed on the form to the total score possible for one participant; and (4) use a scatter plot for the score of all males and females in social skills. It should also be noted that for research question two which examines social skills, other variables in this study that impact the response to this question are the VIA online survey, participants treated with the VIA survey and the VIA Institute on Character reports since the survey is built around character strengths.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to proceeding with this study, appropriate permission will be obtained from the Lynn University Institutional Review Board using Form I and Part C as well as from the principal and governing board of Riviera Beach Maritime Academy, parents and their children to participate in the study (see Appendices B, B1 and B2; C, C1, C2 and C3). The researcher will provide a training session for participants' parents and professional development for students' instructor (see Appendix E, E1 and E2). The principal will also send a letter to each parent informing them of this research study as an extension of the participants' coursework at school and how parents can be supportive. Given that the principal of Maritime Academy has invited the researcher to

administer the VIA survey to participants who are minors, at no time will the researcher be privy to names of students or other confidential information pertaining to students. Consistent with the aforementioned, the researcher will receive a report from the makers of the VIA survey regarding the participants' character strengths by gender only. Moreover, any discussions with the students' instructor whether before the VIA online survey or after regarding participants will be by gender only. At all times, students' rights and privacy will be fully protected. In addition, the participants will take the VIA online survey in the computer lab on the campus of their high school. Therefore, the researcher will not subject the participants to any risks, danger or harm.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the gender base mixed methodology used in this research study on the impact of a secondary character education impact on secondary students' character strengths and social skills. It also presented the purpose of the study, research questions, the setting, subjects, data collection and data analysis.

Riviera Beach Maritime Academy, a secondary charter school was selected using the methodology presented in this study (see Appendix B, B1 and B2). Although a secondary charter school was selected as the setting for this study, the research method can also be applied to traditional secondary public schools. Maritime Academy will use the findings in this study to determine whether there is a correlation between secondary students who identify and use their character strengths improve in social skills. Pending the findings of this research study, Maritime Academy will consider implementing school-wide the secondary character education model used in this study in order for all of their secondary students to identify and use their character strengths as well as increase their social skills.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings in this study support the effectiveness of a student centered secondary character education program implemented for one month. A student centered secondary character program is part of what makes secondary character education effective and meaningful to secondary students. This concept was described in the literature review (Seligman et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2003). To the extent that secondary students' friends, family, teachers, employers, and their community are incorporated into the secondary character education program, this will make the program a more personal experience and hence, student-centered. Effectiveness was measured by three factors: (1) the components of the secondary character education program; (2) increased participants' social skills based on the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students' Social Skills: Likert Scale Measurement;" and (3) participants identified and used their character strengths (VIA Institute on Character Researcher's Report, 2015; Peterson and Park, 2009; see Appendices G and I).

The research study was a mixed study design with more qualitative components than quantitative. For this reason, data analysis focused primarily on qualitative data collected and less on the quantitative data collected. Initially, twenty-one secondary students participated in the study but five participants mutually agreed to discontinue. Therefore, $n = 16$. Consent was collected from the Maritime Academy's governing board, principal, participants' instructor, parents, and participants (Appendices B, B1 and B2; C, C1, C2 and C3). At all times, the participants had the same instructor. The study was

conducted over a one-month interval based on approval letter from the Lynn University’s Institutional Review Board dated April 14, 2015 and the final meeting with participant’s instructor on May 15, 2015 (see Appendix P). As a contrast to effective secondary character education, Table 4.1 shows two elementary character education programs recommended by Florida State legislation, Section 1003.42 (2) (s), Fla. Stat. (2014). Whereas Table 4.1 shows elementary character education focus on the six pillars of character each month; hands-on art and environmental projects; craft templates for coloring and cut-outs; picture books; related songs and videos effective secondary character education is personally meaningful to secondary students by helping them identify and learn how to use their character strengths as well as improve their social skills.

Table 4.1

Curricula for Elementary Character Education Programs

Program Contents				
Program	Florida State Recommended Grade Level	Curriculum	Available Related Activity	Instructional Support
Character Counts	K through 5	Defines and highlights one of the following six pillars of character each month: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.	A website that lists what other schools are doing such as “Kids for Peace” based on uplifting the world through love and action using such things as hands-on arts and environmental projects.	Training and coaching; assessments and evaluations; lesson plans and activities for instructors and parents; picture books and posters.

Character First	K through 5	Classroom packs that defines and highlights the 20 character traits with animal illustrations such as: attentiveness – dear, conservation – koala bear, courage – brown bear	Family packs of the 20 character traits and Dr. Smith’s Blog that discusses issues related to character education.	Craft templates for coloring and cutout projects; short stories; video vignettes; character cards, anchor charts, songbook and CD, stickers, picture books, education DVDs
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Source: Josephson Institute (2014) charactercounts.org; Strata Leadership, LLC (n.d.) <http://characterfirsteducation.com/c/>

When the participants in this study were asked if they would preferred to use the elementary character education models in Table 4.1 or the secondary education model used in this study, they unanimously said they preferred the one used in this study. Table 4.1 references the components of elementary character programs recommended by Florida State and these include: emphasis on one of six pillars of character each month; relating character traits to animals; craft templates for coloring and cut-outs; picture books; related songs and videos.

The reasons participants gave for preferring the secondary education model used in this study were: (1) it was more meaningful because they understood how to use what they learned in real life; (2) it also was important to participants because it helped them to have a deeper understanding of themselves they will always remember; and (3) participants learned how to apply their new understanding to present and future decision making that included future academic goals regarding college.

The findings of this study were twofold: (1) the components of secondary character education and the summative review compared to the benchmarks of effective

character education observed by Berkowitz and Bier (2007); and (2) participants' increased social skills, and identified and used their character strengths.

Researchers, Fraenkel et al. (2012) suggest when evaluating research in education, interpretation of summary statistics can be understood without ambiguity when the actual number of cases and their corresponding percentages are presented. Consistent with this model, the data for social skills on the Likert scale are presented as actual scores and as the percentage that each score represent.

The first research question is based on identifying the components of secondary character education and a narrative of the summative review that incorporates qualitative data collected from the participants' instructor at the end of the research period. The summative review was used primarily to identify effective components of secondary character education and explain why and how the components were effective.

Research question one:

What are the components of an effective secondary character education program that make it unique for secondary students?

Findings for Research Question One – The Summative Review

Research question one:

What are the components of an effective secondary character education program that make it unique for secondary students?

The summative review is reported in two parts:

- *Part I.* Table 4.2 lists the components of the secondary character education program that the participants' instructor found most effective.

Effective secondary character education is grounded in professional development for instructors and efficacious teaching strategies. This approach is age appropriate and goes beyond the content of elementary character education programs. Effective secondary character education is student centered and must be part of the solution strategy to positively impact secondary students while they are in school and continue after their graduation.

- *Part II.* This part of the summative review is a narrative of a discussion that was held with the participants' instructor at the end of the research period.

Part I of Summative Review

Table 4.2

Participants' Instructor's Order of Effectiveness for Secondary Character Education Components

Participants' Instructor's Order of Effectiveness for Age Appropriate Secondary Character Education Components
1. Professional development
2. Modeling/mentoring
3. Direct teaching strategies
4. Explicit character education program
5. Interactive teaching/learning strategies
6. Social and emotional curriculum
7. Academic curriculum integration
8. Classroom/behavior management strategies

Source: (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 40).

Part II of Summative Review

The goal of part two of the summative review was to evaluate the impact on how participants' learned using the components of secondary character education as outlined in part one of Table 4.2. The participants' instructor conducted one-on-one discussions with each participant and reported the outcomes of those discussions as agreed between participants and their instructor. The discussions reviewed the participants' perceptions of how and why the secondary character education program had any impact on them. Participants as a group expressed that they learned by their instructor's modeling, mentoring, direct teaching strategies, academic integration, and interactive teaching sessions. All of the participants expressed that they benefitted from the secondary character education program in at least one of the following ways: (1) they gained greater understanding of themselves; (2) understood more clearly what academic goals they wanted to make; (3) expressed increased self-confidence; (4) visualized themselves as successful college students; (5) learned how to make better decisions; and (6) motivated to increase their social skills.

One of the contributing factors participants expressed to explain why they benefitted from participating in the secondary character education program was that they made a connection between their personal character strengths that they identified and used and with their social skills. For example: Thirteen out of sixteen students reported to their instructor that since learning their character strengths, they were motivated to increase their social skills and actually did according to participants' instructor. Participants explained that this was because they had greater pride in themselves and that caused them to think twice about their decisions and behavior. The

participants' new thinking process was also explicitly supported by the participants' instructor as she scaffolded and modeled using the Bruner Spiral Curriculum in practical ways that reinforced participants' character strengths and helped to increase participants' social skills by using contrasting demonstrations (Johnston, 2012; Appendix N).

Having discussed how and why participants' learned from the secondary character education model used in this study, it is appropriate to discuss that this model was student centered and engaged secondary students. The model from the outset helped participants identify and use their character strengths. This factor engaged the participants and helped them connect with the secondary character program used in this study. Participants expressed that having written immediate feedback in the form of their personal character strengths report validated their character strengths. Fifteen of sixteen participants reported that they would always remember the greater understanding they have of themselves as a result of learning their character strengths. The participants' instructor also involved students by asking them to relate what was important to them in their daily lives such as with friends, family, work, their community and used their responses to augment her instruction. In this way, participants were the focus or center of the program as they learned practical ways to use secondary character education in their daily lives.

Some notable strengths in the secondary character education model used in the study expressed by the participants' instructor were: (1) the quality of the professional development equipped her to be prepared to successfully implement the program; (2) facilitating the secondary character education program into content did not interrupt scheduled instruction but actually supported instruction; and (3) observing the value

and benefits to participants motivated the participants' instructor to plan to use this model with all her classes in the future. The participants' instructor also indicated that there were no inherent weaknesses in the secondary character education model used in this study.

The participants' instructor summarized the impact on participants of the secondary character education program used in this study as follows: "Since learning their character strengths, students are more engaged in learning as demonstrated by greater class participation and making an application of what they learn to their present as well as future academic goals. This type of effective secondary character education program was a life changing event for students because the students understood the relevance of the program to them. It's something that most of the students will remember because the impact was on different levels such as intellectually, socially, and emotionally" (Vanessa Hill personal communication May 15, 2015; see Appendix F, F1). The researcher would like to do a follow up with participants in the first quarter semester of the 2015-2016 school year to determine participants' feedback on the secondary character education program at that time.

Research question two has two segments: The first segment is based on the instructor's perception of participants' social skills by scoring on a Likert scale where 1 = regressed to 5 = improved greatly (see Appendix G). The second segment of research question two investigated the participants' character strengths. Qualitative data on the participants' character strengths were obtained from a report supported by psychometric data from the VIA Institute on Character (Peterson and Park, 2009; see Appendix I).

Research question two:

What impact did the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

Findings for Research Question Two – Social Skills and Character Strengths

Research question two:

What impact did the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

The triangulation the researcher used to address this question were: the completed “Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor’s Perception of Students Social Skills: Likert Scale Measurement” from 1 = regressed to 5 = increased greatly (Likert scale) for all participants during an interview with the participants’ instructor; the VIA Institute on Character Researcher’s Report (2015); and data summarized in cross-break tables as well as a scatterplot (see Appendices G and I). The Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor’s Perception of Students Social Skills: Likert Scale Measurement provided the quantitative data of the participants’ social skills and the VIA Institute on Character Researcher’s Report (2015) was used to obtain the qualitative data of the participants’ character strengths.

Table 4.3 shows the participants’ social skills scores for each domain and these scores were converted to percentages for comparison. Participants who increased their social skills scored 3 or 4 according to the Likert scale and are reflected as 38 percent and 43 percent respectively of all participants. The final data set in Table 4.3 shows the range for all social skills scores is 2 – 4 whereas the mode is 4.

Table 4.3*Participants' Instructor's Perception of Social Skills on the Likert Scale at One-Month Interval (n=16)*

	1	2	3	4	5
	Regressed	Stayed the Same	Average	Slightly Increased	Greatly Increased
Scores	0	3	6	7	0
	1	2	3	4	5
	Regressed	Stayed the Same	Average	Slightly Increased	Greatly Increased
Percent	0	19	38	43	0
	Range		Mean	Mode	
Scores	2 – 4		3.25	4	

In Table 4.4, 13 participants who increased in their social skills or scored ≥ 3 on the Likert scale represent 81 percent of all participants. Table 4.4 also disaggregates the total number of participants who increased in their social skills by gender. There were 11 males who increased their social skills. That represents 69 percent or 11 of 13 participants who increased their social skills.

Table 4.4*Participants' Instructor's Perception of Improved Social Skills at One-Month Interval*

Participants (Score ≥ 3)			
Number		Percent	
13		81	
Participants ($n = 13$)			
Male	Percent	Female	Percent
11	69	2	13

Figure 4.1 illustrates the social skills scores from the Likert scale for all participants on a scatterplot where more than 75 percent of participants increased in their social skills (scored ≥ 3). No participant regressed (scored one) or increased greatly (scored five) in their social skills on the Likert scale according to the participants' instructor.

Using *IBM SPSS Statistics 23* software, Figure 4.2 shows the graph of the mean for social skills scores is $y=3.25$. The graph also indicates the regression to the mean where the slope is expressed as $y = 3.38 - 0.01x$. The value of x is the unstandardized coefficient constant that is labeled as B as shown in Table 4.5 and thus, $x = 3.375$. The slope in Figure 4.2 is slightly negative and shows a gradual or very moderate decrease from slightly above the mean to just below the mean. Figure 4.2 further supports that 13 of 16 participants improved their social skills and thus, obtained a score of ≥ 3 on the Likert scale.

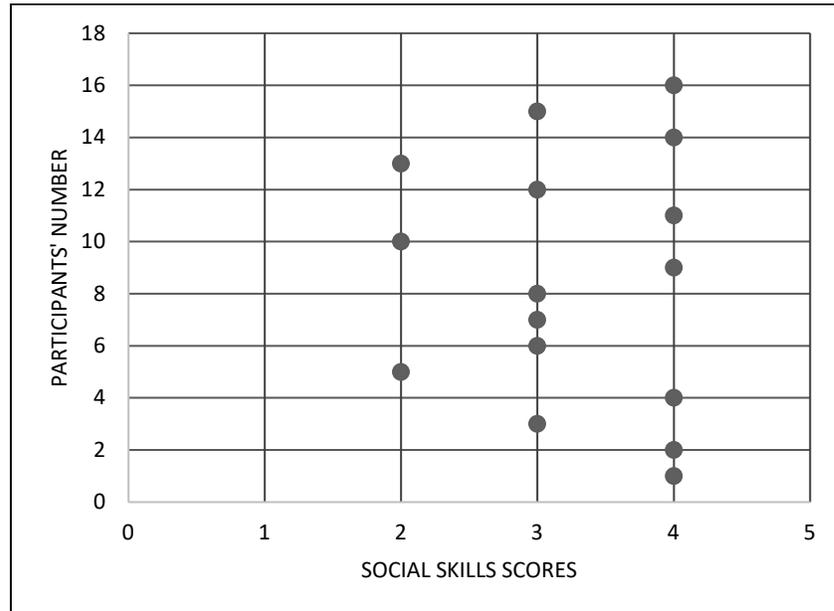


Figure 4.1

Participants' Instructor's Perception of Social Skills Scores for all Participants at One-Month Interval

The remaining segment of research question two investigated the qualitative aspects of the impact that the secondary character education model used in this study had on participants' character strengths. The researcher used the VIA Youth Inventory Online Survey as the instrument (Peterson and Park, 2009). The psychometric data is validated for all 24 core character strengths used in this instrument (see Appendix D, D3). For each administration of the survey, immediately after taking the survey, participants talked enthusiastically amongst themselves about their character strengths.

Subsequently, the researcher coached the participants in a group discussion on character strengths and used corresponding skits to demonstrate how to use their character strengths as well as how their instructor would reinforce their character

strengths. One of the skits involved a male student (Participant A) who had social intelligence as one of his most likely character strengths. The researcher read to the participants the explanation for social intelligence using the explanation provided by VIA Institute on Character (see Appendix D, D2).

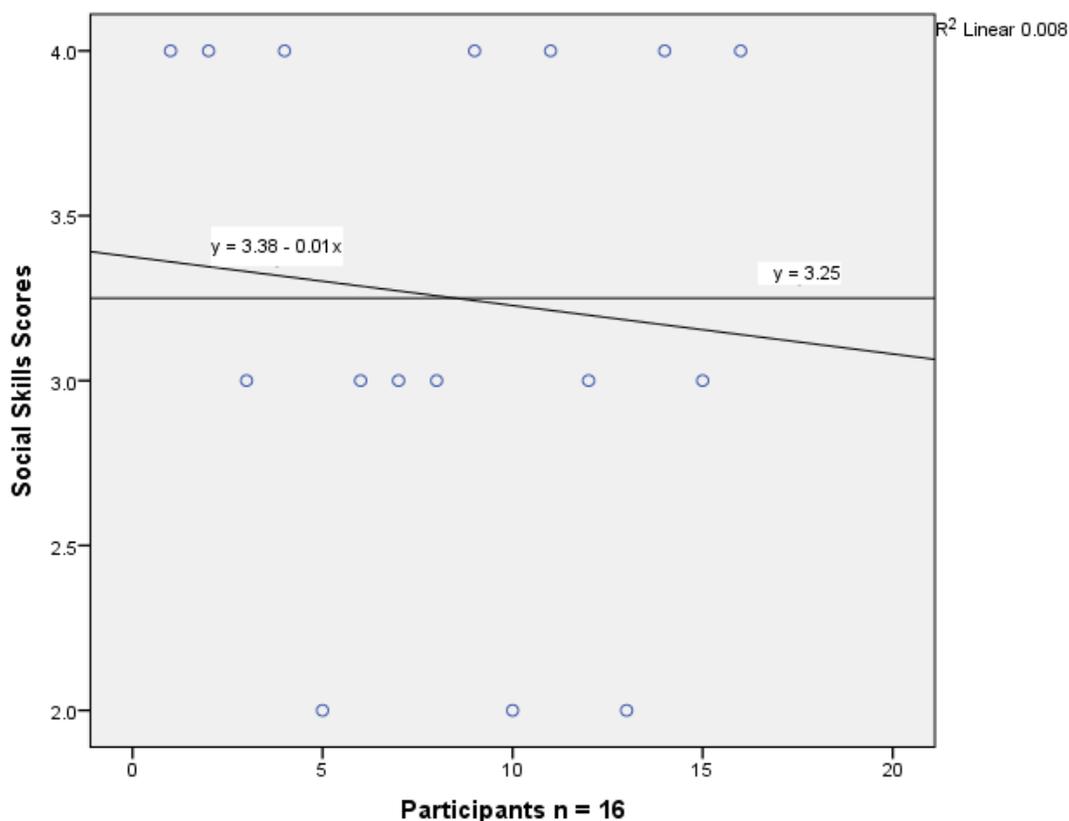


Figure 4.2.

Graph of the Mean and Regression to the Mean for Participants' Instructor's Perception of Social Skills Scores at One-Month Interval

The skit was a hypothetical situation at work where Participant A gave a kind reminder to a co-worker (the researcher) to watch her lateness. The co-worker responded very abruptly: "I don't care what administration thinks. They better be glad I came to work!" This skit was followed by a class discussion. Participant A said that after

his co-worker's response, he would not say anything more to her at that time but give her a chance to calm down. To continue the skit, sometime later, Participant A saw this same co-worker crying and he asked: "What's wrong? Can I help?" The co-worker explained that her mother was in the hospital with cancer. The researcher then asked Participant A why he chose to speak with his co-worker the second time. Participant A explained, his co-worker was obviously upset and it seemed like she needed help. Participant A also said that he thought it was safe to offer help during the second encounter compared to the way she responded during the first time. The conclusion of this skit was reinforced with further explanations of practical application of social intelligence.

Table 4.5.

Unstandardized Coefficients for Social Skills Scores

		Coefficient(a)	
		Unstandardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	3.375	.419
	Participants n =	-.015	.043
	16		

(a) Dependent Variable: Social Skills Scores

In addition, the researcher used the VIA Institute on Character Researcher's Report (2015) to identify participants' character strengths (see Appendix I). The report organized the character strengths using a Likert scale to evaluate each participant's

online survey. The range on the report's Likert scale was from 1 to 5 corresponding to least likely to most likely character strengths respectively. In most cases, participants had more than one character strength for a given score. (Peterson and Park, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004). In Table 4.6, the researcher organized all 16 participants' character strengths by the highest score (most likely) and the lowest score (least likely).

In Table 4.7, the greatest frequency for the most likely character strengths in common is separated by gender. As many as six males are listed as mostly likely to have humor as a character strength in common whereas two females show leadership, perspective, social intelligence, bravery, creativity, and kindness for their most likely character strengths in common. Table 4.7 also shows the most likely character strengths in common between both males and females are social intelligence and kindness. In this case, twice as many males are most likely to have social intelligence and kindness as character strengths in common than females.

Character Strengths and its Link to Academic Achievement

Although effective secondary character education is seldom used as part of the curricula to help secondary students be successful in school and post-graduation, researchers support the need to redress this trend. The impact on secondary students that identify and use their character strengths is linked with students have a greater sense of well-being and improved academic achievement (Seligman et al., 2009). Researchers have also found that the self-regulation character strength is twice as effective in predicting high school grades in comparison to intelligence quotients (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005). In one study, instructors reported that secondary students who participated in a positive psychology education program developed

character strengths such as curiosity, love of learning and creativity that steadily aligned to greater student learning and school engagement over an 18-month period as shown in Figure 4.3 (Seligman et al., 2009).

Table 4.6

Most Likely and Least Likely Character Strengths for all Participants (n=16)

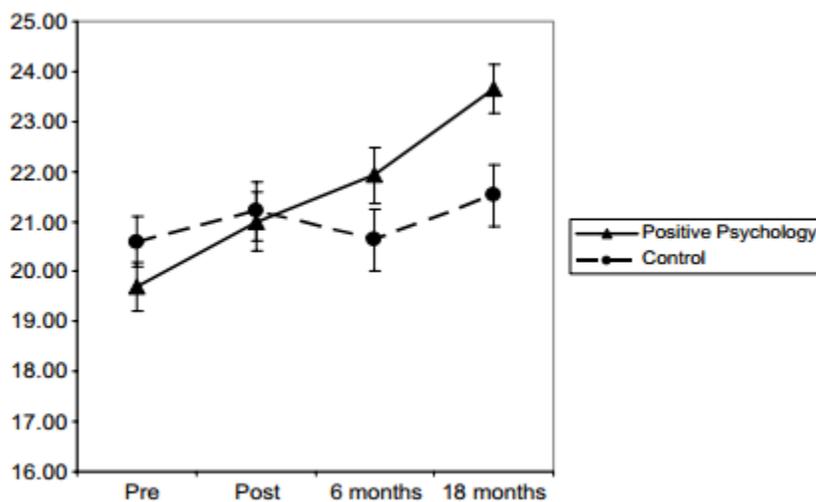
Student Number	Most Likely	Least Likely
1	Creativity	Forgiveness
2	Love	Perseverance
3	Love	Self-Regulation
4	Hope	Spirituality
5	Forgiveness	Spirituality
6	Humor	Appreciation of Beauty
7	Leadership	Spirituality
8	Bravery	Spirituality
9	Bravery	Appreciation of Beauty
10	Love	Appreciation of Beauty
11	Humor	Spirituality
12	Humor	Love of Learning
13	Social Intelligence	Spirituality
14	Honesty	Social Intelligence
15	Bravery	Self-Regulation
16	Bravery	Spirituality

Table 4.7*Greatest Frequency for the Most Likely Character Strengths in Common*

Males		Females	
Humor	6	Leadership	2
Honesty	5	Perspective	2
Hope	5	Social Intelligence	2
Gratitude	5	Bravery	2
Kindness	4	Creativity	2
Social Intelligence	4	Kindness	2

Between Gender

Males		Females	
Kindness	4	Kindness	2
Social Intelligence	4	Social Intelligence	2

**Figure 4.3.***Learning Strengths of Secondary Students as Reported by Instructors.*

Source: Seligman et al., 2009, p. 209.

In addition, other researchers noted that “good character is associated with desired outcomes such as *school success*, leadership, tolerance, kindness, altruism, the valuing of diversity, and the ability to delay gratification” (Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth, 2000) [italics added]. Some of these desirable outcomes are directly related to character strengths such as leadership, kindness, and self-regulation. Similarly, secondary students who have learned and use their character strengths have likewise experienced the impact of greater success in school. Therefore, there are compelling reasons for school districts to amend the current trend regarding effective secondary character education and make it ubiquitous for secondary students.

Another way that character strengths impact secondary students’ learning relates to matriculation and success in college. To the extent that secondary students develop character strengths such as self-regulation, this will impact their academic achievement in college. In a study of undergraduates, Lounsbury, Fisher, Levy, and Welsh (2009) found “that self-regulation was among the character strengths most associated with academic achievement and with college satisfaction.” Commenting on character strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) wrote concerning self-regulation, it is a “vital psychological strength that is crucial to personal well-being and, accordingly should be amply cultivated and fostered” (p. 516). Hence, effective secondary character education can be used to reinforce multiple character strengths knowing that secondary students are much more likely to experience greater academic achievement both as secondary students and as a foundation for academic achievement in college.

Effective Secondary Character Education: Impact on Secondary Students and Society

Effective secondary character education is rarely used as one of facets of the multi-dimensional approach to help secondary students succeed in school and post-graduation (Christle et al., 2007; Seider, 2012). Yet, more broadly and beyond the participants in this study, the link between character strengths, academic achievement and effective secondary character education has the potential to positively impact secondary students. The following is a macroscopic examination of secondary character education and some of its impact on students.

A growing number of educators and employers recognize that secondary students need more than strong academic skills to be successful after graduation. More often secondary students need critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as social intelligence to be effective employees (Jackson, 2014). Effective secondary character education can be part of the solution strategy to propel conveyance of these traits to students. Secondary students would learn how to acknowledge the obvious but take an interest into exploring other solutions or explanations. They would also learn that to obtain a viable answer, some situations require grit or the ability to persevere in considering a matter until one obtains the solution. They would learn by developing social intelligence that social mores differ across societies. As secondary students are repeatedly exposed to opportunities to develop grit, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and social intelligence in secondary character education, they learn how to adapt these skills for personal use. In this way, secondary character education can be used to help students develop skills that make them more marketable and have a level of professionalism to successfully compete in a culturally diverse environments.

Another impact of effective secondary character education is associated with the population of foreign born secondary students enrolled in secondary schools in the United States. According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, more than 1.2 million secondary students are foreign born which includes English Language Learners (ELL) and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, [ESA, U.S. Census Bureau], 2011). This creates in secondary schools an environment of the multivariate nature of language and culture. ELL and ESOL secondary students need to be career ready and successful post-secondary school. Researchers, Watkinson and Hersi (2014) suggest foreign born students may benefit from small group learning where school counselors use an approach that provide the student a venue to: (1) share their perceptions of various themes in life; and (2) help them develop the *character* to support purposeful plans for their future. Therefore, an effective secondary character education program can impact ELL and ESOL students in their preparation to have a more meaningful future. Indeed, many people immigrate to the United States for this very purpose of having a more meaningful future. To leave this matter to chance and not make a concerted effort that includes effective secondary character education may cause other members of society to bear part of the economic responsibility for ELL and ESOL post graduates who are unprepared to enter society as productive members.

A very important impact of effective secondary character education is in connection with the persistence of disengagement in secondary school. As many as 40 to 60 percent of secondary students are disengaged from school (Wang and Fredricks, 2014). This is cause for great concern because secondary students who are disengaged from school are more likely to drop-out of school, underperform academically,

experience a widespread number of psychosocial assaults, and follow the path of the school-to-prison-pipeline (Li and Lerner, 2011; Rubin, 2014). Hence, it is much more efficacious for secondary students and society to use effective secondary character education in secondary schools as part of the solution strategy to help students become more engaged in school.

The relationship between secondary character education and its impact on student engagement is evident in one study of more than one thousand secondary students from European American, African American and Latino ethnicities (Li and Lerner, 2013). The researchers reported: “behavioral engagement influenced cognitive engagement ... positive emotions and motivational thoughts intensify participation, and positive feelings *broaden cognitive capacity*” (pp. 20, 29) [italics added]. The researchers concluded: “To maximize the schooling experiences of all youth, educators and practitioners need to devote effort to create ... developmentally appropriate school environments so students are emotionally connected to school activities and personnel” (Li and Lerner, 2013, p. 31). Additionally, Wang et al. (2014, p. 724) observed: “Behavioral engagement may be related to lower risk behavior because it limits the time and energy available for deviant activities and also strengthens a youth’s connection to the institution.” Thus, since effective secondary character education has been shown to help secondary students become more engaged in school, it is part of the developmental or age appropriate strategies that fosters an environment that helps students connect with school (Seligman et al., 2009; Li and Lerner, 2013).

The aforementioned illustrates the impact that effective secondary character education can have on secondary students. The challenges facing secondary students are formidable. The conglomeration of these challenges suggests that a student centered

effective secondary character education program can be used as part of the solution to benefit secondary students. The impact of effective secondary character education can be an integral part of the solution strategy to help secondary students be successful in school, at work, and in society. Effective secondary character education extends benefits to the community and society as secondary students flourish as successful young adults.

Summary of Findings

In this research study, effective secondary character education began with professional development for the participants' instructor and then engaging the participants to learn more about themselves. The components of effective character education that engage secondary students was emphasized. The application of reinforcing participants' character strengths and increased social skills used real life events that participants understood. This helped participants apply and personally benefit from what they learned. Participants also learned the thought process of how to make better decisions. They recognized that the same process could be used in planning their future. Participants were engaged from the beginning to the end of the secondary education program used in this study.

Effective secondary character education separates itself from elementary character education in primarily three ways. First, it is age appropriate and framed around the needs of secondary students. Second, the content of effective character secondary education differs from elementary education because it addresses situations that secondary students are more likely to experience. Third, effective secondary character education teaches students how to use what they learn in their daily lives in settings they are likely to encounter. While use of stickers, coloring and cut-out projects, songs, and a list of pillars of conduct may suffice for elementary character education,

effective secondary character education requires a different and more comprehensive program.

Through data collection and analyses of the secondary character education model used in this study, the researcher demonstrated how the model could be used as an effective secondary character education program. As reported by the participants' instructor, where the components of effective secondary character education were used, 13 of 16 secondary students increased their social skills and 15 of 16 participants identified and effectively used their individual character strengths.

More significantly, effective secondary character education has a broad application to the solution strategies of challenges facing secondary students. Through character strengths, it has been linked to greater academic achievement for secondary students and undergraduates. Other impacts of effective secondary character education that are implemented in secondary schools are summarized as follows:

- (1) Effective secondary education can help students develop perseverance, critical thinking and problem solving skills coupled with social skills and the level of professionalism that savvy secondary students need in addition to strong academic skills in today's competitive marketplace.
- (2) The growing number of ELL and ESOL students can also benefit from secondary character education program that teach them character strengths that align with the greater likeliness of a successful future.
- (3) Given the persistent disengagement of secondary students from school, effective secondary character education can help students connect to school by identifying and learning to use their character strengths; learn how to use social intelligence to build better relationships with others; increase their sense of self-efficacy; as

these changes occur, students are more likely to become behaviorally engaged with school; broaden cognitively; and increase academic achievement.

These are a sample of the implications of effective secondary character education can have on secondary students, their schools and society. It positively impacts students in facing some of the major challenges secondary students confront because it is part of the solution strategy that needs to be more fully utilized by school districts. To ignore the benefits of effective secondary character education is a disservice to secondary students, schools, and society due to the maelstrom of negative psychosocial behavior related to some disengaged secondary students. In contrast, when one considers the depth of the impact of effective secondary character education, it becomes salient that it positively impacts students and society as secondary students identify and use their character strengths, improve their behavior and relationships with others by implementing the varied social skills they learn, connect with their schools and graduate with stronger academic skills.

In Chapter V, the researcher will discuss the conclusions based on the findings presented in Chapter IV of this study. Chapter V will also present the implications of the study, limitations, and recommendations for future investigations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study was based on a consistent lack of effective secondary character education programs in secondary schools even though such programs are linked with positive outcomes such as students' increased social skills, awareness and use of their character strengths, and increased academic achievement (Seligman et al., 2009; Graff, 2012). Leming, former president of Character Evaluation Associates, a firm specializing in the evaluation of character education programs reviewed three periods of active use of character education programs in the United States: (1) 1890 – 1940; (2) 1960 – 1980s; and (3) the current period. Prodigiously, Leming found a lack of secondary character education programs in secondary schools (James S. Leming, Ph.D., personal communication, November 21, 2014).

Researchers observed that effective secondary character education programs and social skills building are an urgent need (Christle et al., 2007; Duckman and Seligman, 2005). This is true for secondary students who are proficient in content areas and for those who are not. To build social skills in secondary students, schools must go beyond elementary character education programs that emphasize a word for the month or a vision based on certain characteristic pillars (Seligman et al., 2009; Romanowski, 2005; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006). Rather, secondary students need character education programs that are personalized to the secondary students' social, intellectual and emotional needs that are common to this group during their teenage years. Effective secondary school character education programs that are embedded in the curriculum

and are relevant to students' social, emotional and intellectual needs have had a positive impact on secondary students' increased social skills, reinforced their character strengths and increased academic achievement (Seligman et al, 2009; Skaggs and Bodenhorn, 2006; Romanowski, 2005).

Research Questions

The researcher focused on identifying the components of an effective secondary character education program and its impact on students' social skills and reinforcing their character strengths. The research questions investigated were:

- (5) What are the components of a secondary character education program that makes it unique for secondary students?
- (6) What impact will the secondary character education program used in this study have on the social skills and character strengths of secondary students?

The research study was a mixed study design with more qualitative constituents than quantitative. Over a thirty-day period, the components of an effective secondary character education model were identified. The model used in this study helped students increase their social skills and identify and use their character strengths. In contrast, elementary character education that focus on learning a pillar of words, coloring projects and corresponding songs would not be age appropriate for secondary students. Effective secondary character education has a substantial impact on secondary students such as their immediate and long-term decisions. Increased academic achievement and school engagement are some other benefits linked to secondary students who identify and use their character strengths.

Summary of Results

The components of effective secondary character education were identified and the most salient were professional development for participants' instructor, pedagogical factors such as modeling, scaffolding, and direct teaching strategies on topics related to the needs of secondary students. Some of the needs of secondary students involved how to apply character strengths and social skills in settings such as at work, college related matters (i.e. completing and writing an essay for a college application), relationships with family and friends. Although participants identified their character strengths and made efforts to use them, they reported to their instructor that during direct discussions and modeling, they benefitted by learning how to use the character strengths more effectively.

Participants' benefits from identifying, using and reinforcing their character strength were substantial. Identifying and using their character strengths helped participants pause and think about how to make better decisions as oppose to being reactive without much thought. These factors further benefitted participants by motivating them to increase their social skills. Daily using their character strengths also helped participants learn how to defuse negative situations in the following order: (1) at their place of employment; (2) with family; and (3) in the community and with friends.

Another benefit participants experienced from learning and effectively using their character strengths was that it helped them to have a greater understanding of themselves. Participants reported that they benefitted from the secondary character education model used in this study because they acquired a deeper understanding of themselves that they could use in making small decisions and in important decisions such as college selection, job interviews, and their future.

Discussion of Results

Although secondary character education programs are rarely used as a solution strategy to teach secondary students, the researcher provided data in this study to demonstrate: (1) the effectiveness of the model used in the study in responding to the research questions; (2) the impact of effective secondary character education on secondary students; and (3) the positive relationship between character strengths and increased academic achievement (Lickona and Davidson, 2005). One of the reasons that the components for secondary education used in this study was effective is that they were much more than trinkets or word-of-the-month character education as is the case with elementary character education. The components of the secondary character education in this study were unique to secondary students in that they were age appropriate for the participants and relevant to their needs. The components were relevant because the participants' instructor used them to effectively address situations related to participants' jobs, practical use of their character strengths in relationships with family and friends, and applying social skills to the thought process for making short- and long-term decisions.

It is also important to consider the impact that effective secondary character education and character strengths can have on secondary students. For example, consider the following:

- Researchers, Duckworth and Seligman (2005) have found that the self-regulation character strength is twice as effective in predicting high school grades in comparison to intelligence quotients. This observation demonstrates that increased academic achievement has been associated with secondary students who learned the character strength of self-regulation.

- In another study, instructors reported that secondary students who participated in a positive psychology education program steadily aligned greater student learning and school engagement over an 18-month period while bolstering character strengths such as curiosity, love of learning and creativity (Seligman et al., 2009).
- Other researchers associate good character and desirable outcomes for secondary students with success in school coupled with character strengths that include leadership, ability to delay gratification (self-regulation), tolerance and kindness (Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth, 2000).
- U.S. public school system reflects a diverse student body that include English Language Learners (ELL) and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). ELL and ESOL secondary students need strategies to be career ready and successful post-secondary school. An effective secondary character education program can impact ELL and ESOL students by helping them improve their decision making skills that would enable them to set immediate goals and goals that would help them have a more meaningful future (Watkinson and Hersi, 2014).
- The relationship between secondary character education and its impact on student engagement is evident in the Li and Lerner, (2013) study. Secondary students have become more engaged in school where schools have effective secondary character education. Effective secondary character education is part of the strategy that promotes an environment that helps students connect with school (Li and Lerner, 2013; Seligman et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2003).

These are just some examples that illustrate the impact of effective secondary character education on secondary students, and the link between character strengths and increased academic achievement.

Implication for Practice and Limitations to the Study

The implication for practice is that the secondary character education model used in this study can be used by districts in their secondary schools to help secondary students gain the benefits in increased social skills and character strengths that have been associated with increased academic achievement (Seligman et al., 2009).

One limitation of this study is that participants were actively involved in the study for approximately one month raising the question whether there was sufficient time to gather meaningful data. One benefit of conducting the study during this period was that all course requirements were completed. Therefore, each class was completely devoted to the secondary character education program. The actual time spent on the secondary character education program per class session was more than was possible in comparison to at any other period during the school year (Personal communication with Tonya Hicks-Brown, April 3, 2015).

In addition, the setting, Maritime Academy is a small school with a student body of approximately 135 students. The principal and participants' instructor are very familiar with the participants. In general, due to the size of the school, they had more interactions with the participants to reinforce the secondary character education program on campus. The outcomes represent meaningful benefits to participants for the period of the study.

Still, this research study used a very small class size and the participants were from a very specialized secondary school. This limitation could be addressed in a future

study that extended to a cross-section of secondary students and a larger sample size of at least 1000 participants from different types of secondary schools. In this way, the benefits and outcomes in this study could be compared to a population with results that could be generalized to secondary students.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this investigation provided an example of some of the immediate impacts on secondary students using an effective secondary character education program, it also raised questions. A future study may help to answer questions such as: (1) What is the long term impact of effective secondary education? (2) To what extent will secondary students actually use effective secondary character education to influence their academic goals? and (3) What was the impact on the secondary character education model used in the study of including a computer based survey with rapid responses as opposed to a handwritten survey and delayed responses? The researcher plans to follow up with the participants in this study in one year to determine whether they are continuing to use their character strengths and obtain the participants' perception of any impact the secondary character education program continues to have.

The researcher also recommends a future study that would apply the effective secondary character education model used in this study because the class size in the study was very small and in a very specialized secondary school setting. A future study should include: (1) an academically mixed group of secondary students as participants; (2) a larger sample size of at least 1000 participants with approximately equal numbers of male and female secondary students; (3) participants from different secondary schools in various geographical locations in the United States; (4) participants from

different socioeconomic backgrounds and different types of secondary schools; and (5) a timespan of at least one year for the study.

A third recommendation is that school districts in the State of Florida that don't currently have an effective secondary character education program might consider using a pilot program for the effective secondary character education model used in this study in order to teach K-12 students character education and conform to Florida State legislation, Section 1003.42 (2) (s), Fla. Stat. (2014):

Beginning in school year 2004-2005, the character development program shall be *required in kindergarten through grade 12*. Each district school board shall develop or adopt a curriculum for the character development program that shall be submitted to the department for approval.

(see Appendix O) [italics added].

Where schools and/or districts implement effective secondary character education, the researcher recommends that administrators and teachers have the appropriate professional development since they are instrumental in implementing an effective secondary character education program. Parents also need to be well informed of their role to make the secondary character education most effective. These are some areas that could be expanded as secondary schools and districts implement effective secondary character education. The basis for this recommendation is: (1) identifiable components of an effective secondary character education program; (2) the benefits and impact on secondary students; and (3) the positive relationship observed between secondary students who identify and use their character strengths with increased academic achievement.

Summary

Chapter I discussed the purpose of the study and statement of the problem. It also raised the two research questions. Chapter II presented the literature review and Chapter III discussed the methodology used in this mixed gender base study. Chapter IV discussed the research questions that were raised by providing data collection, analyses and results of the study. Chapter V presented a discussion of the results of this study, implications, and recommendations for future research. The researcher concludes that given the success of the effective secondary character education model used in this study, the impact of effective secondary character education on secondary students socially, emotionally, and intellectually, and the connection between character strengths and increased academic achievement that secondary schools would benefit from a district wide implementation of effective secondary character education.

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Appendix A

Permission to Use VIA Survey Instrument

From: Kelly Aluise <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, May 14, 2014 12:47 PM
To: N'Quavah Velazquez
Subject: VIA Research Request

Hello NQuavah,

We are very pleased to provide permission to use the VIA Youth Survey in your research project, thereby expanding the knowledge base on the VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues.

To use the VIA Survey, please have your subjects go to this address to register and complete it:

<http://www.viacharacter.org/Survey/Account/Register>

*If the participants are under the age of 13, they will need to have a parent or guardian register them on the website in order to take the survey.

Please tell your participants to watch for the field requesting a research code (after completing the survey), and to be certain to enter your code:

Use of the code will enable us to compile your data for you into a single Excel spreadsheet. When you want your results, just let me know via e-mail. You may not charge your research subjects any fee for taking the VIA survey. **Please note that we **will not** release identifying information (name or email address) for the individuals on the Excel sheet. The report you will receive from the VIA Institute will not include this information with the VIA scores—only age and gender will be included. If you need to identify individual participants you will need to assign them a “Participant ID Code”. The “Participant ID Code” field will be immediately after the “Research Code” field. If you do not need to identify individual participants, you may instruct them to leave this field blank.

We very much want to retain the scientific integrity and reputation of the VIA Survey of Character, and so request that you limit your application and interpretation of results to that which is provided by VIA and otherwise is scientifically based. Here is a link to the VIA Institute's Guidelines for Use and Interpretation:

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Permission-for-Use>

Finally, in exchange for providing this free service, VIA requests that you share your research results with us. Please do so by e-mailing me a report, which I shall share with the VIA staff.

Again, thank you for your interest in expanding the body of scientific knowledge on character strengths and for including the VIA Survey on Character in your work. We look forward to learning of your results and wish you good luck in conducting your study. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Kelly Aluise
Communications Specialist
VIA Institute on Character

[REDACTED]

Appendix B

B1. Principal's Permission Letter for Participants



Riviera Beach Maritime Academy [REDACTED]

September 29, 2014

Mrs. Velazquez,

I am inviting you as a researcher to oversee administration of the VIAME online youth survey for the purposes of determining by gender whether there is any impact or correlation of the character education survey results on secondary student performance for FCAT Retakes and/or academic performance according to teacher perceptions.

As principal, I have the authority to invite you to conduct the survey on our campus. I assure all concerned that all confidentiality of students will be protected and held to the highest standard in compliance with Florida State and federal law. Hence, consent forms are unnecessary.

We would like to work with you on an October date in order for students and their instructor to begin applying the results of the survey as soon as possible.

Tonya Hicks-Brown M.S.

Principal
Riviera Beach Maritime Academy

"Preparing Students for College and Career Opportunities in the Maritime, Science, and Technology Fields"

B2. School District of Palm Beach County Charter School Research Protocol

Re: School Board or Palm Beach County Procedures for Charter School Research

Randy Powell [REDACTED]

Fri 4/3/2015 10:39 AM

Inbox

To: N'Quavah Velazquez <[REDACTED]>;

Cc: Joe Melita <[REDACTED]>; Jim Pegg <[REDACTED]>; Sandra Raymond <[REDACTED]>;

In regard to research procedures for charter schools, I can confirm what is stated in your email is my understanding as well. Research applications handled by my office are applicable to our traditional schools and I advise those who wish to conduct research at charter schools to approach the individual Charter School's Board for approval. For more information about the School Board of Palm Beach County's research policy, please see <http://www.schoolboardpolicies.com/p/2.142>

Randy Powell

Manager, Department of Research & Evaluation

School District of Palm Beach County

[REDACTED]

Ms. Hicks <[REDACTED]>

Tue 4/7/2015 2:43 PM

To: N'Quavah Velazquez; This message was sent with high importance.

Mrs. Velazquez,

The governing board of the Riviera Beach Maritime Academy gives permission for your research project to be done in our Reading classes based on the fact that student names and identity will not be published.

Tonya Hicks-Brown M.S.

Principal

Riviera Beach Maritime Academy

[REDACTED]

<http://www.rbmaritime.org/>

Appendix C

C1. Participants' Instructor's Consent Form

Lynn University

PROJECT TITLE: Effective Secondary Character Education Impact on Secondary Students' Social Skills and Reinforcing Character Strengths

Project IRB Number:

Lynn University 3601 N. Military Trail Boca Raton, Florida 33431

I, N'Quavah R. Velazquez, am a doctoral student at Lynn University. I am studying in the Scholar Practitioner Doctorate in Educational Leadership program. One of my degree requirements is to conduct a research study.

DIRECTIONS THE PARTICIPANTS' INSTRUCTOR

You acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age, and that you do not have medical problems or language or educational barriers that preclude understanding of explanations contained in this authorization for voluntary consent you are otherwise entitled. This form provides you with information about the study. I, the Principal Investigator N'Quavah R. Velazquez, am asking you to participate in my research study. Please read this carefully as it will answer many of your questions. Ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to the participants at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY: The purpose of this study is to investigate and provide a rationale to implement an effective student centered secondary character education program that will validate the components of effective secondary character education to provide a basis for an action research gender based mixed study and to help secondary students (1) identify and use their individual character strengths; and (2) increase their social skills. The reason for this research is to validate the effectiveness of a secondary character education program model that can be used in charter and traditional public secondary level schools.

It is hoped that by means of this study, the selected secondary students will use the character strengths identified in the character education program to increase their social skills. There will be approximately 23 secondary charter students invited to participate in this study. The participants are all students at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy (Maritime Academy) who are enrolled this year in the special preparation course for retakes of standardized test.

PROCEDURES

As the participants' instructor, your role will be to assist in administering the online Values in Action Inventory Survey for Youth (VIA online youth survey) to all participants in the computer lab on the Maritime Academy Campus. After students arrive to computer lab, the investigator and participants' instructor will remain in the computer lab until the students leave the computer lab. Further, at the time of arrival, the investigator will reaffirm with participants' instructor that all students know their code identifiers and that the instructor has the list in case a student(s) forget their code identifier. After the instructions have been read by the investigator, participants will be instructed to go to the VIA registration screen using the website written on the board. The survey consists of 90 multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. There is no right or wrong answer. The survey is designed to help students know themselves better. All students will receive an online personalized report of their character strengths within three minutes of completing the VIA survey.

Participants will be instructed to sit quietly and review their character strengths until everyone completes the survey. Immediately after all participants complete the survey, the investigator will provide each student with a handout that explains all character strengths and a discussion will follow to answer any questions the students may have.

Expectations of participants in the secondary character program will include reminders and support from the school's principal and participants' instructor who will have professional development provided by the investigator to use the character strengths in school, with friends, and at home with their family. After the discussion, the investigator will encourage the participants to use their identified character strengths in school and at home with family and friends. The participants will also be informed that routinely, they will be asked to identify one or more core character strengths that relates to the content of the curriculum taught by their instructor. At that time, the participants' instructor will elaborate on participants' responses. This concludes the VIA survey administration.

Prior to administering the VIA online youth survey, the investigator will provide professional development for participants' instructor in understanding character strengths, modeling, use of the Bruner's Spiral Curriculum model and ways to scaffold character strengths in the curriculum. Scaffolding character strengths into the curriculum is correlated to increased social skills and this will help reinforce participants' character strengths. The Bruner's Spiral Curriculum model gives students an opportunity to gather and practice new knowledge. Then, when students are confronted with new experiences, they reflect on how they can apply what they know in new ways. The investigator will communicate by email or telephone with participants' instructor bi-weekly for approximately four weeks after the subjects complete the VIA online youth survey to determine the impact of various aspects of secondary character education such as: (a) the participants' use of their identified character strengths and instructor's perception of increased social skills; and (b) address any weaknesses that may impede participants' progress in the secondary character education program that have been identified by students, parents or participants' instructor.

Approximately thirty days after participants have completed the VIA online youth survey, the investigator will meet with the participants' instructors to complete summative review. The summative review will assess the overall effectiveness of the character education model used in the study. Part of the summative review will use data from the report on character strengths of the participants from the VIA Institute on Character, the makers of the VIA online youth survey. In addition, data collection from the following sources will be used to determine the effectiveness of the secondary character education model used in this research study: (a) the facility of the secondary character education program used in the study to provide the key components of secondary character education; and (b) collect the score of each student for increased social skills using the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement." This Likert scale is from (1) to (5) where (1) = regressed and (5) = improved greatly for a possible total of five points. The investigator will record scores for each student on individual sheets that have been numbered from 1 to 23 and include the participants' gender. These are the items that will all be discussed at the meeting with the participants' instructor.

EMAILS, INTERVIEW AND TWO SURVEYS

The investigator will email or make brief telephone calls bi-weekly to the participants' instructor to provide any additional assistance with any unintended outcomes. In addition, a follow up interview will be necessary at a mutually agreed upon time and place. There are two surveys, the summative review and the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" with a combined total of 11 questions. An interview will be required to complete the survey and should take about 30 minutes. First, we will complete the summative survey followed by "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement." In the interview, you will be asked to elaborate on questions that are relevant to this study and/or a follow up by telephone call may be necessary. No interview will be recorded.

POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORT: This study involves minimal risk. In addition, participation in this study requires a minimal amount of your time and effort.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: There may be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research. But knowledge may be gained that helps validate components of effective secondary character education. Also participants may learn and use their character strengths as well as increase their social skills.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS: There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research. There are no costs to you as a result of your participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information obtained through this study, as it relates to a specific individual, will be kept private and confidential *except that you, the participant's instructor requests that your full name may be used in the study*. All students will be referred to by gender in this study. You have the right to use identifying codes for participants that will not be available or used by the investigator. The investigator suggests that participants' data be coded with a fictitious name and/or numbers. Further, the investigator suggests that the codes be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in your office or classroom). Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Results of this study will be published in a dissertation, and may be published in scientific journals or presented at professional meetings. In addition, your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. Data will be summarized and displayed in an aggregate form.

All information will be held in strict confidence and will not be disclosed unless required by law or regulation. The investigator will have participants' character strengths report and participants' instructor's perception of increased social skills by gender only; this data will be stored in a locked filed cabinet and destroyed at the end of the research. All the data gathered during this study, which were previously described, will be kept strictly confidential by the investigator.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS/ACCESS TO CONSENT FORM: Any further questions you have about this study or your participation in it, either now or any time in the future, will be answered by (Principal Investigator, N'Quavah R. Velazquez) who may be reached at: [REDACTED] and Dr. J. Melita, faculty advisor who may be reached at: [REDACTED]. For any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call Dr. F. Farazmand, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at [REDACTED]. If any problems arise as a result of your participation in this study, please call the Principal Investigator, N'Quavah R. Velazquez ([REDACTED]) and the faculty advisor (Dr. J. Melita) immediately.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.

AUTHORIZATION FOR VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read and understand this consent form. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been assured that any future questions that may arise will be answered. I understand that all aspects of this project will be carried out in the strictest of confidence, and in a manner in which my rights as a human subject are protected. I have been informed of the risks and benefits. I have been informed in advance as to what my task(s) will be and what procedures will be followed.

I voluntarily choose to participate. I know that I can withdraw this consent to participate at any time without penalty or prejudice. I understand that by signing this form I have not waived any of my legal rights. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's printed name _____

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT: I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. The person participating has represented to me that he/she is at least 18 years of age, and that he/she does not have a medical problem or language or educational barrier that precludes his/her understanding of my explanation. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid.

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date of IRB Approval: _____

C2. Participant's Parent Consent Form

Lynn University

PROJECT TITLE: Effective Secondary Character Education Impact on Secondary Students' Social Skills and Reinforcing Character Strengths

Project IRB Number:

Lynn University 3601 N. Military Trail Boca Raton, Florida 33431

I, N'Quavah R. Velazquez, am a doctoral student at Lynn University. I am studying in the Scholar Practitioner Doctorate in Educational Leadership program. One of my degree requirements is to conduct a research study.

CONSENT FORM FOR MINORS

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by N'Quavah R. Velazquez, from Lynn University, College of Education. I hope to validate the components of effective secondary character education and to help secondary students (1) identify and use their individual character strengths; and (2) increase their social skills. The reason for this research is to validate the effectiveness of a secondary character education program model that can be used in charter and traditional public secondary level schools. Your child was selected as a participant in this study because the principal at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy, Ms. Hicks thought it would complement your child's course for special preparation for standardized retake tests.

If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will take a one-time 15-minute online survey in the computer lab of the Maritime Academy and learn their character strengths. Thereafter, the students' instructor for the special preparation for standardized retake tests will teach the students various ways that they can use their character strengths and work to increase their social skills.

This study involves minimal risk. There may be no direct benefit to child by participating in this research. But knowledge may be gained that helps validate components of effective secondary character education and participants may learn and use their character strengths as well as increase their social skills.

There is no financial compensation for your child in this research. There are no costs to you as a result of your child's participation in this study.

Any information obtained through this study that can be identified with your child, will be kept private and confidential. The investigator will not use your child's name in this study. The investigator will refer to all students as male or female.

Results of this study will be published in a dissertation, and may be published in scientific journals or presented at professional meetings. In addition, your child's privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. Data will be summarized and displayed in an aggregate form. All information will be held in strict confidence and will not be disclosed unless required by law or regulation. You are free to choose whether or not to permit your child to participate in this study. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled if you choose not to permit your child to participate.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS/ACCESS TO CONSENT FORM: Any further questions you have about this study or your participation in it, either now or any time in the future, will be answered by (Principal Investigator, NQuavah R. Velazquez) who may be reached at: [REDACTED] and Dr. J. Melita, faculty advisor who may be reached at: [REDACTED]. For any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call Dr. F. Farazmand, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at [REDACTED]. If

any problems arise as a result of your participation in this study, please call the Principal Investigator, N'Quavah R. Velazquez [REDACTED] and the faculty advisor (Dr. J. Melita) immediately.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.

AUTHORIZATION FOR VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read and understand this consent form. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been assured that any future questions that may arise will be answered. I understand that all aspects of this project will be carried out in the strictest of confidence, and in a manner in which my child's rights as a human subject are protected. I have been informed of the risks and benefits. I have been informed in advance as to what my child's task(s) will be and what procedures will be followed.

I voluntarily choose to permit my child to participate. I know that I can withdraw this consent to participate at any time without penalty or prejudice. I understand that by signing this form I have not waived any of my legal rights. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form.

Parent's printed name _____

Parent's signature _____ Date _____

C3. Minor's Assent Form**Lynn University**

PROJECT TITLE: Effective Secondary Students' Character Education Impact on Secondary Students' Social Skills and Reinforcing Character Strengths

Project IRB Number:

Lynn University 3601 N. Military Trail Boca Raton, Florida 33431

I, N'Quavah R. Velazquez, am a doctoral student at Lynn University. I am studying in the Scholar Practitioner Doctorate in Educational Leadership program. One of my degree requirements is to conduct a research study.

ASSENT FORM FOR MINORS

I am willing to take part in the study called "Effective Secondary Character Education Impact on Participants' Social Skills and Character Strengths." I understand that the researcher, N'Quavah R. Velazquez, is from Lynn University, College of Education is hoping to validate the components of effective high school character education and help high school students (1) identify and use their individual character strengths; and (2) increase their social skills. I understand that I will take a one-time 15-minute online survey in the computer lab on the Maritime Academy campus and learn my character strengths. There are not any wrong or correct answers. I am asked to simply honestly complete statements such as:

At the end of the survey, my class will have a discussion with the researcher, N'Quavah R. Velazquez and have an opportunity to ask questions. My instructor for the special course preparation for standardized retake tests will teach me and the students in my class various ways that we can use our character strengths and ways to increase our social skills.

I am taking part in this research study because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time. No one will know my answers except my teacher. The researcher will receive a list of character strengths for my entire class without our names but has the label "male" or "female."

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

C4. Letter to Parents

N'Quavah R. Velazquez

Lynn University - Donald E. and Helen L. Ross College of Education
3601 N. Military Trail Boca Raton, Florida 33431

March 20, 2015

Riviera Beach Maritime Academy
[Redacted]

Dear Parents:

As principal of Maritime Academy, Ms. Tonya Hicks-Brown MS, has invited me, Ms. N. Velazquez - Researcher to implement a secondary character education program that will identify your child's character strengths as an extension to the "Preparation for Retake of Standardized Tests" course that your child is currently enrolled in. Character strengths are the positive characteristics of a student's personality. Your child is scheduled to take an online survey on campus in the Maritime Academy computer lab to identify his/her character strengths. Upon completing the survey, a personalized report of his/her character strengths will be produced immediately. Each student will be able review their online report any time.

Below is a list of the 24 core character strengths that will be identified:

Creativity	Zest	Humility
Curiosity	Love	Prudence
Judgment	Kindness	Self-regulation
	Social	Appreciation of Beauty &
Love of Learning	Intelligence	Excellence
Perspective	Teamwork	Gratitude
Bravery	Fairness	Hope
Perseverance	Leadership	Humor
Honesty	Forgiveness	Spirituality

Source: Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. New York: Oxford University Press and Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. www.viacharacter.org

No additional time in school or costs will be required of students, parents or the Maritime Academy to participate in this secondary character education program. After the students have taken the survey and identified their character strengths, Ms. Hill, the instructor will discuss character strengths as she teaches the content of the "Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test" course.

Research supports that secondary students who identify and use their character strengths in school and at home are more engaged in school and increased social skills. You can assist Ms. Hicks-Brown and Ms. Hill by discussing your child's identified character strengths and encourage him/her to use them at home, with friends, and in school.

Should you have any questions or concern, please call the school at [Redacted] or Ms. Velazquez at _____.

Sincerely,

Appendix D

D1. VIA Youth Online Survey Sample Questions

Directions: Below is a list of statements describing people who are 10 to 17 years old. Please read each one, and then decide **how much it is like you** and mark the correct radio button. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as you possibly can. We will rank your strengths and compare them to others' strengths when you have answered all of the 90 questions.

Questions

1. I love art, music, dance, or theater.

Very much like me Mostly like me Somewhat like me A little like me Not like me at all

2. I stick up for other kids who are being treated unfairly.

Very much like me Mostly like me Somewhat like me A little like me Not like me at all

3. I like to think of different ways to solve problems.

Very much like me Mostly like me Somewhat like me A little like me Not like me at all

4. I don't have many questions about things.

Very much like me Mostly like me Somewhat like me A little like me Not like me at all

5. In a group, I give easier tasks to the people I like.

Very much like me Mostly like me Somewhat like me A little like me Not like me at all

D2. Character Strengths Definitions from the VIA Online Survey

1. Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence

You notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.

2. Bravery

You are a courageous person who does not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain. You speak up for what is right even if there is opposition. You act on your convictions.

3. Creativity

Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are. You are never content with doing something the conventional way if a better way is possible.

4. Curiosity

You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.

5. Gratitude

You are aware of the good things that happen to you, and you never take them for granted. Your friends and family members know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time to express your thanks.

6. Kindness

You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well.

7. Leadership

You excel at the tasks of leadership: encouraging a group to get things done and preserving harmony within the group by making everyone feel included. You do a good job organizing activities and seeing that they happen.

8. Love of learning

You love learning new things, whether in a class or on your own. You have always loved school, reading, and museums-anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.

9. Spirituality

You have strong and coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit in the larger scheme. Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.

10. Prudence

You are a careful person, and your choices are consistently prudent ones. You do not say or do things that you might later regret.

11. Perseverance

You work hard to finish what you start. No matter the project, you "get it out the door" in timely fashion. You do not get distracted when you work, and you take satisfaction in completing tasks.

12. Zest

Regardless of what you do, you approach it with excitement and energy. You never do anything halfway or halfheartedly. For you, life is an adventure.

13. Love

You value close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. The people to whom you feel most close are the same people who feel most close to you.

14. Teamwork

You excel as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, you always do your share, and you work hard for the success of your group.

15. Hope

You expect the best in the future, and you work to achieve it. You believe that the future is something that you can control.

16. Humility

You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not regard yourself as special, and others recognize and value your modesty.

17. Social intelligence

You are aware of the motives and feelings of other people. You know what to do to fit in to different social situations, and you know what to do to put others at ease.

18. Forgiveness

You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.

19. Perspective

Although you may not think of yourself as wise, your friends hold this view of you. They value your perspective on matters and turn to you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and to yourself.

20. Honesty

You are an honest person, not only by speaking the truth but by living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and without pretense; you are a "real" person.

21. *Fairness*

Treating all people fairly is one of your abiding principles. You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.

22. *Judgment*

Thinking things through and examining them from all sides are important aspects of who you are. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind.

23. *Humor*

You like to laugh and tease. Bringing smiles to other people is important to you. You try to see the light side of all situations.

24. *Self-Regulation*

You self-consciously regulate what you feel and what you do. You are a disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and your emotions, not vice versa.

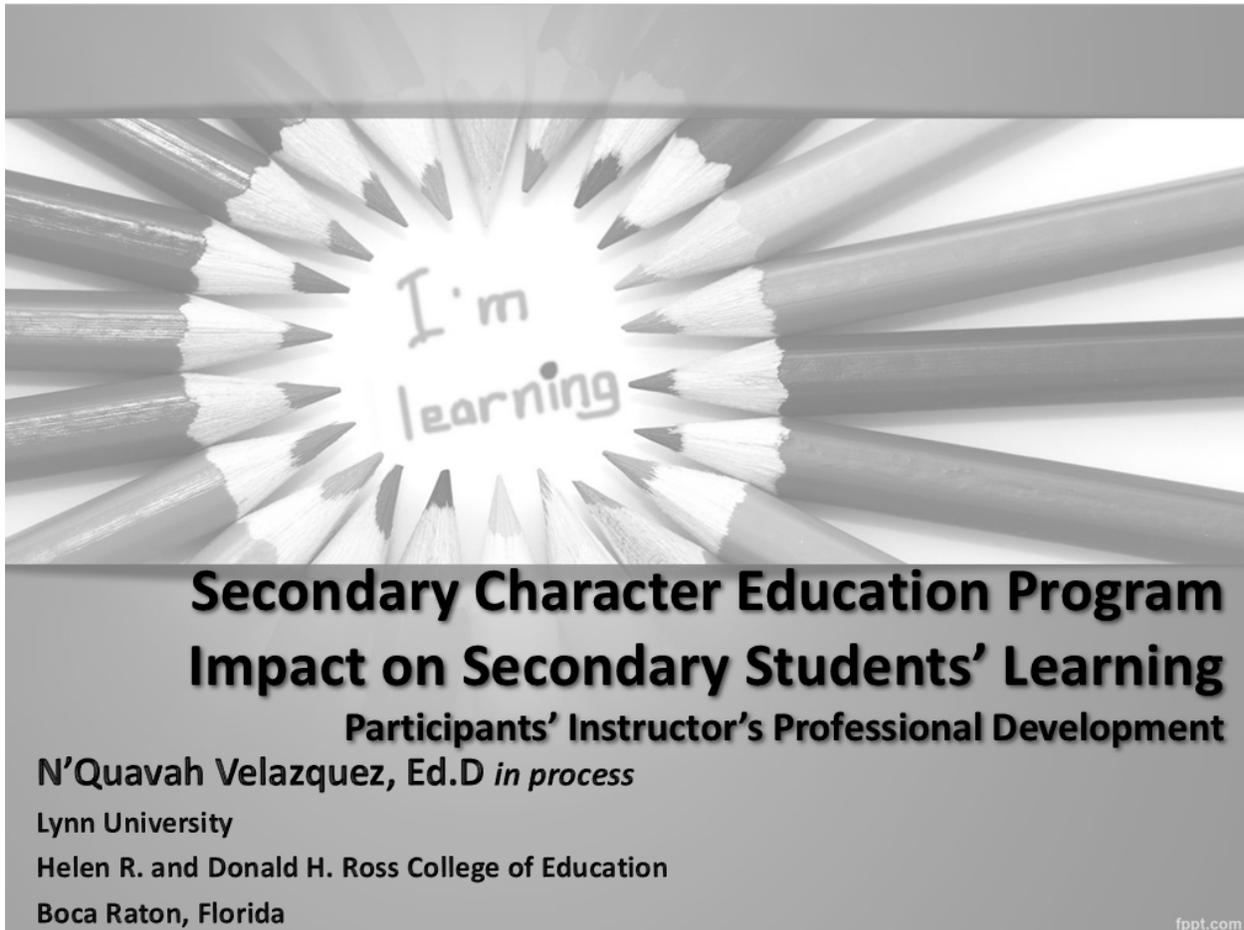
D3. VIA Youth Online Survey Psychometric Data**24 Character Strength Alphas (Average Across Two Samples)**

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	0.86
Bravery	0.91
Creativity	0.90
Curiosity	0.83
Fairness	0.85
Forgiveness	0.87
Gratitude	0.81
Honesty	0.84
Hope	0.87
Humility	0.83
Humor	0.93
Judgment	0.89
Kindness	0.83
Leadership	0.93
Love	0.84
Love of Learning	0.93
Perseverance	0.87
Perspective	0.82
Prudence	0.79
Self-Regulation	0.75
Social Intelligence	0.69
Spirituality	0.95
Teamwork	0.85
Zest	0.89

Source: (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Peterson and Park, 2009;
<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Research/Psychometric-Data-VIA-Youth-Survey>)

Appendix E

E1. Power Point Presentation: Professional Development – Students' Instructor



Definition

- ***Character education*** “is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue or citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society”

Source: (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Character Education ... Our Shared Responsibility [CE], 2005).

Introduction

- ***Pre-survey components for secondary character education preparation.***
- Handout - a written explanation of the VIA 24 core character strengths.
- Confirm the dates and consistent times of day for use of the secondary school computer lab for the three days to administer the VIA online survey:
 - Two days for students enrolled in each of the two sections of the “Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test ” course
 - The third day as a contingency plan for any student who was absent or unable to take the survey on the day his section was scheduled.

Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Peterson and Park, 2009

Pre-Survey Prep

- Review the online registration screen for the VIA online survey to familiarize instructor with what and where student information is entered on the registration screen.
- Instructor will issue students' confidential identifier codes and bring the list of identifier codes on all days the VIA online survey is administered in case a student(s) forgets their identifier code.
- Discussion of ways to scaffold character strengths in the curriculum.

Research

- **We know: students' academic achievement is very important.**
- **Researchers observed that**
 - **Effective secondary school character education program(s) [CEP] enhances character strengths and social skills.**
- **Effective Secondary School CEP**
 - **can occur *only* when it is aligned to students' deepest goals and purposes as well as have the support of their parents, administrators and students' faculty** (Ryan, 2013).

Support System

- ***Ms. T. Hicks-Brown*, Principal**
- ***Ms. Hill*, Instructor**
Instructor of the “Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test” course that your child is currently enrolled in.
- ***Participants***
Students enrolled in the course named above taught by Ms. Hill.
- ***Parents of participants***
- ***Ms. Velazquez*, Researcher**

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Values in Action Online Survey**
 - All students will take the VIA online survey in the computer lab on campus.
 - VIA teaches students their character strengths.
 - Character strengths are a classification of positive traits that each person has.
 - It helps students to get to know themselves better by emphasizing their positive characteristics.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Parent's Role**
 - Remind students to use their identified character strengths in daily interaction with other students, instructors, family and friends.
 - Encourage your child to talk about their identified character strengths.
 - Communicate with instructor about your child's character strengths.
-

Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
 - The students' instructor will give students the opportunity to use their character strengths in class as it relates to the curriculum by means of scaffolding:
 - Scaffolding instruction “refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process” (Hidden Curriculum, 2014).
 - Scaffolding character strengths into the curriculum is correlated to increase students academic achievement; it helps students have a stronger understanding of content area and also increased social skills.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
- **Ask students to bring their character strengths and explanations handout to each class. Instructor will have extra handouts or ask students to share a handout with a student that does not have one.**
- **A class discussion should follow each course segment to incorporate character strengths to ensure that students understand the content area including the use and meaning of the character strength under discussion.**

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
- **Specific ways to scaffold character strengths into curriculum:**
 - ***Role playing*** related to content area or practical situation that participants may face where students act out (1) ways not to demonstrate a character strength followed by (2) how to demonstrate the character strength.
 - ***Writing and speaking assignments*** where students are asked to summarize a reading passage and include a character strength that was needed or displayed by a character(s) from the reading passage.
 - ***Storytelling*** where instructor leads the discussion by telling a story and focuses on the events of the story as well as a character strength that was needed or displayed by a character(s) in the story.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
- **Specific ways to scaffold character strengths into curriculum:**
 - ***Group activities*** where the instructor divides the class into different groups after the class has read selected material. Each group will discuss the details of the material and take notes. The groups will also determine which character strengths are demonstrated or are needed. Groups will then rejoin as a class and have a spokesperson for each group.
 - ***Daily reminders*** to students to use their identified character strengths in daily interaction with other students, instructors, family and friends.
 - ***Daily reminders*** to students to discuss their identified character strengths with their parents.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- *Components for actual day of VIA youth survey administration.*
- At the time of arrival, the researcher will reaffirm with students' instructor that all students know their code identifiers and that the instructor has the list in case a student(s) forget their code identifier.
- The students' instructor will introduce the researcher to the students after which the students will then be asked to make sure their computers are on and listen quietly as the researcher explains the character education model and then reads the VIA survey instructions.
- Students will be reminded to enter the research permission code exactly as it is written on the board and their individual code identifier as provided by their instructor in the appropriate spaces provided on the online registration screen. Should a student forget his/her code identifier, the students' instructor will go to that student's workstation and quietly give her the code to maintain confidentiality of identifier codes.

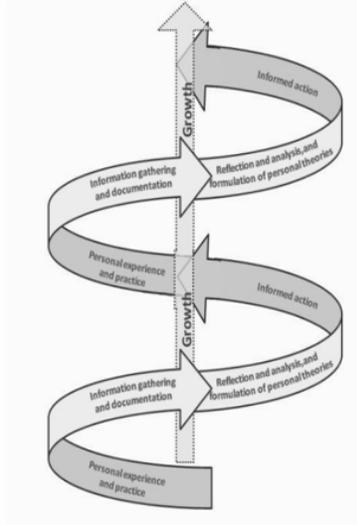
Effective Secondary Character Education

- *Components for post-survey – The Researcher*
- Within one week following the participants completion of the survey, the researcher will use her report from the VIA Institute on Character to identify which core character strengths corresponds to the majority of participants and provide the students' instructor with this data to assist the instructor in selecting which core strengths to emphasize.
- The researcher will also follow up by email or telephone with students' instructor once a week for approximately one month after the subjects complete the VIA survey to discuss any intended and unintended outcomes of the procedures recommended.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- *Components for post-survey – The Researcher*

Bruner's Spiral Curriculum Model



Source: <http://jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/TaughtCourse/TC-teachers-guide.pdf>

Effective Secondary Character Education

- *Students' instructor's perception of student academic achievement, proficiency in content area and increased social skills – Data Collection.*
- Approximately thirty days after participants have completed the VIA online survey, the researcher will meet with the students' instructors to gather data on the students' social skills scores using the "Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement" that uses a scale from (1) to (5) where (1) = regressed and (5) = improved greatly.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- *Students' instructor's perception of student academic achievement, proficiency in content area and increased social skills – Data Analysis.*
- Conduct a summative review of the following:
 - students' use of identified character strengths
 - professional development
 - administrative support
 - implementation of the VIA survey for all days
 - the methods used by instructors to encourage students to use their identified character strengths

Questions and Answers

E2. Power Point Presentation – Parents' Training



**Secondary Character Education Program
Impact on Secondary Students' Learning
Parents' Presentation**

N'Quavah Velazquez, Ed.D *in process*

Lynn University

Helen R. and Donald H. Ross College of Education

Boca Raton, Florida

Welcome Parents

OUTLINE

- Student will participate in character education on the school's campus.
- Review the secondary character education program.
 - The principal, students' instructors, students, parents, and researcher all contribute to the secondary character education program.
- Demonstrations
- Questions and answers

Definition

- ***Character education*** “is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue or citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society”

Source: (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Character Education ... Our Shared Responsibility [CE], 2005).

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- **We know: Students' academic achievement is very important.**
- **Researchers observed that:**
 - **Effective secondary school character education program(s) [CEP] enhances character strengths and social skills.**
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 - **can occur *only* when it is aligned to students' deepest goals and purposes as well as have the support of their parents, administrators and students' faculty** (Ryan, 2013).

Support System

- ***Ms. T. Hicks-Brown*, Principal**
- ***Ms. Hill*, Instructor**
Instructor of the “Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test” course that your child is currently enrolled in.
- ***Participants***
Students enrolled in the course named above taught by Ms. Hill.
- ***Parents of participants***
- ***Ms. Velazquez*, Researcher**

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Values in Action Online Survey**
 - Students will take the VIA online survey in the computer lab on Maritime Academy's campus.
 - Students will identify their character strengths.
 - Character strengths are a classification of positive core values that each person has.
 - It helps students to get to know themselves better by emphasizing their positive strengths.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Values in Action Online Survey**
 - There are 24 core values that are assessed for youth and they are listed in your handouts.
 - Students will be given the same handout.
 - Secondary students who use their identified character strengths have become more engaged in school and take more responsibility for their assignments.
 - This has led to increased social skills for some students.

Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Peterson and Park, 2009

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Parent's Role**
 - **Remind students to use their identified character strengths in daily interaction with other students, instructors, family friends and at work.**
 - **Encourage your child to talk about their identified character strengths.**
 - **Communicate with instructor about your child character strengths.**

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
 - The students' instructor will give students the opportunity to use their character strengths in class as it relates to content by means of:
 - Distributing to students a list of the 24 core values and their meaning
 - Discussions and role playing
 - Writing and speaking assignments
 - Storytelling

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Students' Instructor's Role**
 - The students' instructor will give students the opportunity to use their character strengths in class as it relates to content by means of:
 - Group activities (ie. Read selected material and discuss as a group which character strengths are demonstrated or are needed).
 - Reminders to students to use their identified character strengths in daily interaction with other students, instructors, family, friends and work.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **School Principal's Role**
 - **Remind students to use their identified character strengths in daily interaction with other students, instructors, family, friends and work during brief visits to students' "Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test" class and in private conversations with participants on campus.**

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Researcher's Role**
 - Provide support to students' instructor on how character strengths can be reinforced while teaching content.
 - Administer online survey to students on the school campus.
 - Collect and analyze data relating to the secondary character education program to develop a model for other secondary schools to use.

Effective Secondary Character Education

- **Demonstrations**
 - **Instructor giving students a writing assignment that includes at least one character strength from a poem that they have read and discussed.**
 - **Principal approaching participant on campus for a private and brief conversation.**
 - **Parent at home with participant discussing participant's identified character strengths.**

Questions and Answers

Appendix F

F1. Participants' Instructor Personal Communication During Summative Review

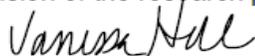
Participants' Instructor Vanessa Hill	Date May 15, 2015
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“Since learning their character strengths, students are more engaged in learning as demonstrated by greater class participation and making an application of what they learn to their present as well as future academic goals. This type of effective secondary character education program was a life changing event for students because the students understood the relevance of the program to them. It’s something that most of the students will remember because the impact was on different levels such as intellectually, socially, and emotionally”.

F2. Participants' Instructor's Validation of Collected Data

Participants' Instructor Vanessa Hill	Date May 15, 2015
--	----------------------

As the participants' instructor in the research project entitled Effective Secondary Character Education Impact on Secondary Students' Social Skills and Reinforcing Character Strengths by N'Quavah R. Velazquez, I, Vanessa Hill validate that the all participants' social skills scores are based on my perception and the summative review reflects my personal thoughts at the conclusion of the research period ending May 15, 2015.



Electronic Signature

Date 5/15/15

Appendix G

Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale Measurement

Student # _____

Gender: Mark an X in the appropriate space. _____Male _____Female

**Instructions: Circle the number that best describes the student's
performance in the following areas:**

- **Social Skills**

 1 regressed 2 stayed the same 3 average 4 improved slightly 5 improved greatly

Appendix H

Effective Character Education Program Components

Content Components

Explicit character education programs
Social and emotional curriculum
Academic curriculum integration

Pedagogical Components

Direct teaching strategies
Interactive teaching/learning strategies
Classroom/behavior management strategies
School-wide or institutional organization
Modeling/mentoring
Family/community participants
Community service/service learning
Professional development

Source: (Berkowitz and Bier, 2007, p. 40).

Appendix I

VIA Institute on Character, Researcher's Report (2015)

	Gender	Appreciation	Bravery	Love	Prudence	Teamwork	Creativity	Curiosity	Fairness
1									
2	M	3.75	4.25	4.75	3.75	3.5	4.75	4.75	3.75
3	M	3	3	3	1.25	3.75	3.75	4.25	3
4	M	5	3.5	4	3	5	4.75	3.75	4.75
5	M	4.5	3.25	4.25	4.25	4	4	5	4.25
6	M	3.75	4.75	3.25	3.25	4.75	5	3.5	3.75
7	M	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5
8	M	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.25	3
9	F	4	4.75	4.75	4	4	4.75	4	3.5
10	F	4.5	5	3.5	5	5	4.75	4.75	4
11	M	3.75	3.5	4	3.5	4	4	3.5	4
12	M	2.5	3	3.5	3	3	3.25	3.25	3
13	M	3.25	3.75	3	3.75	4.75	3.5	3.25	4.25
14	M	1.25	3	2.75	3	3	3.5	3.25	2.75
15	M	2.75	3	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.75	3.5	3.75
16	M	3.5	5	4.5	4	5	4.75	4.5	4.5
17	M	1	2.75	2	1.75	2.5	2	1.75	1.5
18	M	4.75	4.25	5	4.25	4	4	4.5	4.25
19	M	4	3.75	3.75	3.25	4.5	3.75	4.25	3.75
20	M	3.5	4.25	4	3.25	3.75	3.25	3.75	4
21	M	3.5	3	3.5	3.75	3.25	3.75	3.25	4
22	M	2	4	2	2.5	1.5	4	3.5	2
23									
24									

	Continued	Gender	Forgiveness	Gratitude	Honesty	Hope	Humor	Perseverance	Judgment	Kindness
	2	M	4	5	3	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.25	4
	3	M	4	3.5	3.25	3.75	5	3.5	3.75	3.75
	4	M	5	5	4	4.5	4.5	4	4	3.75
	5	M	3.25	3.75	3.5	4.5	4.25	3	3.75	3.5
	6	M	2.25	4.75	4.75	3.75	3	3.5	4.75	4.25
	7	M	4	3	3.5	5	5	4	5	5
	8	M	3	3	3	3	3.5	2.5	3	3
	9	F	4	4	3.5	3.75	3.25	3.5	4	4.25
	10	F	5	5	5	4.25	4	5	4.25	4.5
	11	M	3.75	4	3.5	4	4	4	4	3.75
	12	M	2.5	3.5	2.75	4.25	3	3	3	3.25
	13	M	5	4.5	4.75	4.25	3.5	3.75	4.25	4.5
	14	M	2.75	3.75	3.5	3	4.25	3.25	2.75	3
	15	M	3.25	3.5	2.75	3.25	3.75	3.5	3	3.25
	16	M	4	5	5	4	5	4.5	5	4.5
	17	M	2.25	2.75	2.25	2.75	2.75	2	2	2.5
	18	M	4.5	4.5	4.25	5	4.75	4	3.75	4.25
	19	M	3.75	3.25	3.75	4.5	5	3.75	2.75	3.25
	20	M	3.75	3	3.25	4.25	5	3.75	3.5	3.75
	21	M	4	4.5	3.5	4	2.75	2.75	3.5	3
	22	M	2	2	5	1	4.5	1	1	1.5

VIA Institute on Character, Researcher's Report (2015) continued

Gender	Continued	Leadership	Love of Learn	Humility	Perspective	Self-Regulati	Social Intelli	Spirituality	Zest
M	2	3.75	4.25	3.75	4.25	4.25	4.5	2.75	4.75
M	3	3.5	3.5	3.25	3.5	2.75	4.75	2.5	4.25
M	4	1.75	3.25	4.5	3.75	5	4	5	3.75
M	5	3.75	3.25	3.25	4	4	3.5	3.5	4.5
M	6	3.5	3.5	1.75	4.25	3.25	4.25	4.75	2.5
M	7	5	5	4.75	4.5	3	4	5	5
M	8	3.25	3	3	3	2.75	3	3	3
F	9	4.25	3.25	3	4.5	3	4.25	4.5	3.5
F	10	5	5	4	5	5	5	2.75	5
M	11	4	4	4	3.5	2.75	4	3.5	3
M	12	2.5	3.5	2.75	3	3	2.5	2.25	3.25
M	13	3.25	2.75	2.75	3.5	4.75	3.5	2.5	3.5
M	14	3.25	2.5	3	2.5	1.5	3	2.25	3.25
M	15	4	3.25	3	3	4	3.5	2	4
M	16	4.5	4.25	4.25	4.25	3.5	4.25	2.75	3.75
M	17	2.75	2	2.25	2	2.75	2.25	1	3
M	18	4	4.5	3.5	4	4	4.75	4.75	4.75
M	19	3.75	2.5	3.25	4	4.5	4	2.5	3.75
M	20	3.75	2.25	3.75	3.75	4	4	3.75	4
M	21	2.5	2.75	2.75	2.75	3.5	4.75	1	4.25
M	22	2	1	3	3	5	1	4.5	2.5

Source: VIA Institute on Character Strengths, Inc. Researcher's Report (2015); Peterson and Park (2009).

Appendix J

Researcher's Grid with Codes

CODES												
	ITP	ICEP	HCEP	NHCEP	IVIA	STP	IVIA*	PERM IRB	PERM SCH	DCVIA	FPSK	ICND
Potential Schools												
Maritime Riviera Beach Academy												
Inlet Grove Community High School												
Everglades Preparatory Academy												
Mavericks High School												

The interview protocol design and structure will be based on the following codes:

- Initial telephone call to the principal (code: ITP)
- The researcher will explain the operational definition of character education and determine whether the principal is interested in such a program for his/her school.
- Interested in character education program (code: ICEP)
- Has a character education program (code: HCEP)
- Does not have a character education program (code: NHCEP)
- Interested in VIA character strengths survey (code: IVIA)
- Second telephone to principal as a follow-up (STP)
- Principal / faculty member interested in implementation of VIA survey (code: IVIA*)
- Permission requested and received from Lynn University IRB and secondary charter school principal (codes: PERM/IRB and PERM/SCH)
- VIA survey administration dates confirmed (code: DCVIA)
- Faculty member's perception of students' social skills as an impact of the VIA survey (code: FPSK)
- Where the level of interest for administrator and/or faculty could not be determined (code: ICND).

Appendix K

Interview for Principal and Instructor for Research Protocol

Initial telephone call to principal:

- Explain that I am a doctoral student at Lynn University and I am doing a research study on character education with secondary level students.
- Explain the operational definition of character education:

“Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2005).

- Ask whether the principal is interested in a character education program.
- Explain that in order for the program to be successful, both the principal’s and instructor’s support is needed.
- Set up a time for next telephone call to principal and faculty member if possible.

Second telephone to principal as a follow up:

- Explain the VIA online survey instrument.
- Determine whether principal and faculty member will support implementation of VIA survey.
- If yes, ask for written permission from school to conduct research study. Determine participants and obtain written consent from participants, their parent and participants’ instructor. Complete Lynn University IRB Form I.
- If no, contact the next school on researcher’s list.

Meeting with principal and faculty member:

- Ask for the information on the group and number of students that will take the VIA survey.
- Ask for the number of students that receive free and reduced lunch to factor this in the data analysis for the research study at a later date.
- Ask to visit the computer lab and demonstrate how to access VIA survey online.
- Ask for the date(s) that the VIA survey will be administered.

Discuss Survey Implementation Day

- Ask if the researcher can arrive 15 minutes early to ensure everything is still according to schedule.
- Explained that once the students have arrived in the computer lab, the researcher and instructor will remain in the computer lab.
- Explained that at the beginning of the VIA survey, the researcher will read survey directions twice.
- The VIA survey researcher’s code will be written on the board for students to sign in online. Students will be reminded to enter their identifier code that they received from their instructor.
- After the survey is completed, as requested by the principal, the researcher will answer any questions the students may have.

Post-Survey Implementation Day

- Ask faculty member for a date to meet with her to discuss:
- Outcomes by gender of students’ performance on standardized test.
- Instructor perception of learning gains as an impact of the VIA survey results.
- Follow-up weekly with participants’ instructor on how the program is proceeding.

Appendix L

Pre-VIA Online Survey and Actual Day Preparations

Pre-survey components for secondary character education preparation.

The researcher will provide a written explanation of the VIA 24 core character strengths to the school's principal and students' instructor (see Appendix D2). The researcher will also confirmed the dates for consistent times of day to use of the secondary school computer lab for the three days to administer the VIA youth survey: One day for students enrolled in each of the two sections of the "Preparation for Retake of Standardized Test" course, and the third day as a contingency plan for any student who was absent or unable to take the survey on the day his section was scheduled.

The researcher will provide a letter for parents as an overview of the secondary character education program and conduct two Power Point Presentation training sessions to help parents understand the secondary character education program and their role (Appendix E, Figures E1 and E2). The dates and times of the training sessions will be coordinated with the students' instructor or school administrator. The second training session will also serve as a contingency plan for parents who were unable to attend the first training session. Handouts will be distributed to parents at these training sessions.

Prior to the survey, the students' instructor will issue students' confidential identifier codes and bring the list of identifier codes on all days that the VIA online survey is administered in case a student(s) forgets his/her identifier code. Should a student forget his/her code identifier, the students' instructor will go to that student's workstation and quietly give her the code to maintain confidentiality of identifier codes.

Appendix M

University of Birmingham, England Certificate for Character Education Program



Statement of Participation

N'quavah R. Velazquez

has completed* the majority of the course including all mandatory tests for:

WHAT IS CHARACTER? VIRTUE ETHICS IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

This two-week online course explored important questions about character education and how it contributes to individual and societal flourishing, and required around four hours of study per week.

Issued: 01 February 2015

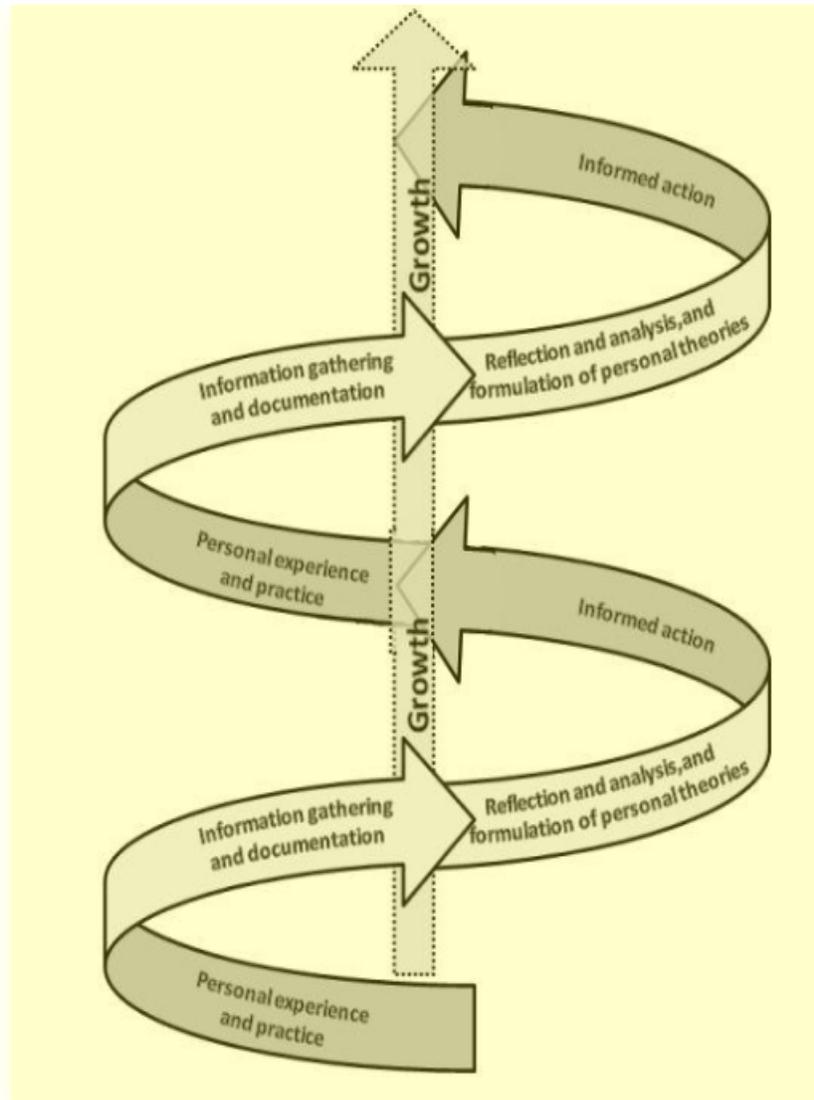
Dr Tom Harrison
Deputy Director, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues
University of Birmingham

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

*This statement confirms that at least 70% of the steps in this course were marked as complete by the student and all mandatory tests were attempted. This statement does not imply the award of credit points nor the fulfilment of a University qualification. It does not verify the identity of the student.

Appendix N

Bruner's Spiral Curriculum Model



Appendix O

Secondary Character Education in Secondary Schools In the Ten Largest Districts in Florida State

District*	Secondary Character Education Curriculum Taught to All Students in Grades 9 – 12**	Related Programs
Miami/Dade	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has not had anyone overseeing character education for at least two years. Its website lists a number of resources on the topic of character education and some secondary students participated in the 2014 Theodore Gibson Oratorical Competition. However, the district does not sponsor a character education curriculum for secondary students.
Broward	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character education curriculum, worksheets, and activities provided for all grades.
Hillsborough	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Government course that is open to select students and used to promote a healthy school culture. • Some students take the HOPE course that teaches in part health and good citizenry.
Orange	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are given word of the month and instructors are encouraged to embed related concepts in curriculum. The district also provides a newsletter for parents on character education.
Palm Beach	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only students in elementary schools are provided with character education programs.
Duval	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only students in kindergarten through grade six are provided with character education programs.

*Secondary Character Education in Secondary Schools
in the Ten Largest Districts in Florida State continued*

Pinellas	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character education is offered to elementary and middle schools as it is considered fundamental to education and a foundation to build academics courses. • The district sponsored a character education speaker for all administrators and faculty in K-12. • Yet, secondary schools still do not have character education programs.
Polk	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district uses <i>Keys to Character</i> that emphasizes word for the month, modeling, class, student and family activities as well as implementation strategies.
Lee	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of the month for secondary schools and related activities for students, parents, and teachers.
Brevard	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily provides positive behavioral support on an as needed basis. • Secondary schools have Youth Leadership Teams and after school clubs that students volunteer to join. • Secondary students are invited to the district office twice a year to watch a video on subjects such as bullying.

Source: *Florida Department of Education 2010-2011 Educational Funding Accountability Act Report.

**The data in Table 1 are based on responses to a telephone survey to each district superintendent's office on December 2 - 5, 2014.

Appendix P

Vertical Timeline for Research Study

Date	Event
May 2014	Permission granted from the VIA Institute on Character to use the VIA Inventory for Youth Online Survey.
September 2014 and April 2015	Permission granted from the principal and governing board to conduct research at Riviera Beach Maritime Academy respectively.
March 11, 2015	DIP Approval
April 14, 2015	Lynn IRB Approval
April 15, 2015	<p>Distributed permission forms for: Participants' instructor Participants Parents</p> <p>Also at the request of Maritime Academy principal, held orientation for students to explain the contents of parents' packet and explain and used demonstrations to highlight participants' role.</p>
April 16, 2015 – Start date for field research	<p>Morning: Professional development with instructor and collected her consent form.</p> <p>Afternoon: Collected consent forms from participants in this class.</p> <p>Participants' instructor and researcher: Discussed with participants the structure of the secondary character education program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participants' Instructor's role b. Expectations of participants c. The character strengths handout and engaged in corresponding demonstrations d. Defined social skills using the operational definition in the researcher's study and engaged in corresponding demonstrations <p>Observed participants' instructor scaffold, model, and use direct teaching strategies to teach social skills and character strength using the VIA Institute on Character handout</p>

	<p>Divided this afternoon period to meet with other participants in the media center with the principal to repeat the same procedures held earlier this day.</p>
April 20 and 21, 2015	<p>Received final consent forms from students who were absent. Participants' instructor informed these students about the secondary character education program.</p> <p>Administered VIA online survey</p> <p>Remained with students to answer any questions and discuss their results.</p> <p>Engaged in corresponding demonstrations.</p>
April 24, 2015	<p>Sent participants' instructor character strengths data from the Researcher's Report from VIA Institute on Character</p>
April 27 through May 14, 2015	<p>Communicated with participants' instructor by email and telephone regarding the progress of the project with participants.</p> <p>It was reported at all times by both the principal and the participants' instructor that the participants were happy participating in the secondary character education program.</p> <p>The participants were benefitting from the secondary character education program.</p> <p>At least six seniors completed the class with participants' instructor by May 11 and the remaining students completed school by May 14.</p> <p>No inherent weakness in the study was evident by participants' instructor or principal.</p>
May 15, 2015 – End date for collection of data	<p>Completed the summative review as well as “Post Character Strengths Survey of Instructor's Perceptions for Students: Likert Scale” Measurement for all students in person and subsequent by telephone interviews</p>
May 18 through August 15, 2015	<p>Data Analysis</p>