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**AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS'
BELIEFS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE
AND SELF-TALK PATTERNS**

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Fall, 1997

MASTERS THESIS PROJECT

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Grand Valley State University

in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education

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Abstract

The relationship between students' beliefs about intelligence and the type of self-talk used was examined among two students with learning disabilities who were identified as having a helplessness profile. Both students viewed intelligence as a static entity and demonstrated a lack of will to learn. Additionally, these students practiced the most negative type of self-talk about their ability when undertaking difficult learning tasks. The students were taught about theories of intelligence and the effects of negative self-talk on their classroom behavior. The results indicated that teaching students about the incremental view of intelligence and the self-talk model may enhance their will to try new strategies. Moreover, these students found learning about theories of intelligence and self-talk as valuable knowledge. These students questioned why no one ever taught them how to use positive self-talk when thinking about their intelligence and learning.

Chapter One

Learned Helplessness

Children with learning disabilities may hold beliefs that accentuate helpless motivational patterns of learning. Past research has indicated that some children with learning disabilities believe that effort plays less of a role in determining the outcome of learning than ability (Dweck & Reppucci, 1973). Furthermore, the child with learning disabilities has a tendency to believe that school success is a product of external factors, such as luck and task difficulty (Kistner, Osborne, & LeVerrier, 1988). When facing difficult challenges, children who perceive learning outcomes as out of their control and due to external factors often exhibit learned helplessness. Sadly, a child with a learned helplessness motivational pattern tends to give up in the face of learning difficulties and exhibits poor academic achievement.

The Debilitating Effects of Learned Helplessness

Research has demonstrated the debilitating effects of learned helplessness. For example, in a study with mice, Seligman and Maier (1968) found that animals pretreated with unavoidable and inescapable shock later failed to escape shock in another situation in which shock was avoidable. The mice were fully capable of performing the response to avoid shock; however, the mice failed to implement the simple response. In describing this behavior, the researchers chose the term helplessness that denotes the belief that one's behavior is independent of the event or outcome.

Similar to contingency learning in experimental psychology, a number of studies (Rotter, 1966; Weiner & Kula, 1970; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973) have shown that children with a learned helplessness profile view their behavior as independent of a difficult task. In other words, these children believe that their response in a learning situation has no effect on the outcome. Consequently, children who are fully capable of solving difficult problems do not believe that they are capable of doing so. Thus, the children are unmotivated and do not persevere through difficult learning situations.

The learned helplessness profile is evident in both children with and without learning disabilities. However, students with learning disabilities significantly differ in their explanations of success and failure than students without learning disabilities. Bryan (1991) found that students with learning disabilities are more apt to attribute their failure to internal factors than students without learning disabilities “but are less likely than normal-achieving classmates to become internal in their attributions for success” (p. 203). This finding suggests that students with learning disabilities attribute their failure in academic tasks to the lack of ability and fail to understand the critical role that effort plays in learning. Furthermore, this study demonstrated the inconsistent way that students with learning disabilities interpret their success in contrast to failure. In other words, students with learning disabilities attribute their failure to lack of smartness and success to luck and task difficulty. Since these types of explanations lead to behavior that perpetuates a cycle of motivational problems,

researchers are concerned about students with learning disabilities who have a learned helplessness profile.

Children with a learned helplessness profile often fail to implement task-specific strategies that lead to successful learning. Failure to use any key strategy when solving tasks is especially problematic to the child with learning disabilities (Borkowski, Weyhing, & Carr, 1988). Even though the child with learning disabilities has average to above average intelligence, this child is less organized, less planful, and has deficits in informational processing (Tollefson et al., 1997). In order to overcome their performance inadequacies, the child with learning disabilities must incorporate specific learning strategies. However, if children with learning disabilities believe that they have little control over the outcomes of their learning, they are apt to view strategy implementation as a futile task. Consequently, these children fail to use strategies that would increase the probability of success. Furthermore, the child with learning disabilities does not explain task failure by the most adaptive explanation; that is, "I failed because I did not try an appropriate strategy."

In sum, children with helplessness profile experience debilitating effects when exposed to difficult learning tasks. Instead of trying harder and putting forth more effort, these children choose to withdraw in the face of failure. As a result, many of these children fail to develop the skills needed to become successful learners. Research has documented the negative effects that helplessness has on some children

with learning disabilities. Because of repeated failure, these children believe that trying hard has minimal effects on the outcome. Consequently, they avoid failing by not trying difficult tasks (Fowler & Peterson, 1981). If they perceive that they can not succeed, they would rather fail than risk people thinking that they are stupid.

Theories of How Learned Helplessness Develops

Parents' influence in attribution beliefs. Parents are in the unique position of influencing their children's beliefs toward learning and achievement. Entwisle and Hayduk (1981) found that children's achievement beliefs are predicted more by their parent's than teachers' achievement beliefs. Furthermore, Parsons, Adler, and Kaczal (1982) found that children's achievement beliefs are more predicted by parents' beliefs than their actual progress in school. These studies do not serve to discard the influences of school and teachers on children's beliefs. Rather, these studies recognize the transmission of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions from parent to child, and in effect, illustrate the strength of dynamics within the family unit.

Recent studies have indicated that mothers' attribution beliefs of their children with learning disabilities mirror the beliefs held by their children. Pearl, Bryan, and Donahue (1980) found that mothers of children with learning disabilities are more likely to attribute their child's success to external factors, such as good luck, than parents of children without learning disabilities. Also, parents of children with learning disabilities are more apt to attribute their child's failure to the lack of ability, when compared to a parent of a child without learning disabilities. Just as important,

these researchers also found that mothers of children with learning disabilities are aware of the similarity between their attribution beliefs about their children and the beliefs held by their children. These findings suggest that parents of children with learning disabilities are key players in the transmission of beliefs that promote a learned helplessness pattern in their children.

How beliefs are conveyed. Parental beliefs are conveyed in a variety of ways.

One venue is how parents explain their children's educational performances. For example, a parent may praise a child for getting an A in mathematics by stressing the natural ability the child has in this domain (Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). In contrast, a parent may tell the child that the A in mathematics is due to the child's hard work and strategic methods employed. Another way that parents transmit beliefs is through a child's observational learning. Children who are raised in homes where parents model adaptive motivational patterns are more likely to mirror their parents' adaptive patterns. Pearl et al. (1980) found that mothers of children with learning disabilities tend to "attribute successes at home to their own ability and failures more to their lack of ability than do mothers of children without learning disabilities" (p. 56). This finding suggests that parents of children with learning disabilities are less confident of their own abilities in managing a household. Consequently, the child with learning disabilities has a greater chance of developing attributions that focus on ability rather than effort.

In sum, parents in particular, model behaviors in which children may adopt as part of their motivation patterns. Parents as role models transmit messages to their children about what factors influence successes and failures. Parental messages are conveyed through beliefs about their own abilities. In assessing what type of messages are conveyed, parents of children with learning disabilities are more likely to attribute their own failure to lack of ability. Thus, children with learning disabilities are more likely to believe that their academic failure is due to the lack of intelligence rather than effort.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess the relationship between a student's idea on intelligence and types of self-talk used by the learner. Students with learning disabilities who possess a helplessness profile may believe that intelligence is fixed; that is, people who are good at something were born with the natural ability to be successful in the area. Research has demonstrated that students who view intelligence as a fixed entity tend to adopt a goal orientation to learning (Blumenfeld, 1992). These students are increasingly concerned with getting the best grades and outdoing their peers in academic performance. If these students fail, they may tell themselves and believe that the reason for their school failure is their lack of natural ability. Consequently, these students may tell themselves that they are dumb, thus, creating a self-made wall of negative self-talk. This negative programming may affect their will to try any new learning strategies that would lead to success.

Informing these students of the incremental view of intelligence may make them more willful to learn. The incremental view of intelligence suggests that people become more intelligent by gaining new knowledge. In other words, students increase their intelligence by learning new strategies that help them solve difficult problems. Students with an incremental view of intelligence tend to adopt a learning goal orientation to learning (Blumenfeld, 1992). These students place a greater emphasis on gaining new knowledge and becoming more competent in an area of study. Consequently, when these students fail, they are more apt to attribute their failure to lack of knowledge rather than lack of ability.

Anecdotal records (Wong, 1994) have suggested that many students with learning disabilities who demonstrate helplessness motivational patterns do not believe that they can change the amount of intelligence that they have. Consequently, this view could negatively impact a student's will to learn. Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

- (a) What views of intelligence do students with learning disabilities who are characterized by a helplessness profile have; and
- (b) Would helping students to recognize the role that self-talk about intelligence plays in success and failure combat their helplessness?

Through the introduction of the self-talk model, the interviewer will try to get each participant to understand the relationship between self-talk and helplessness behavior. In sum, this study will accomplish three things:

- (a) examine the participant's views on intelligence;
- (b) identify where the participant is on the self-talk model; and
- (c) introduce how negative self-talk about intelligence can lead to helplessness behavior.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in order to avoid ambiguity:

- (a) Learned helplessness is a condition in which children show lack of persistence. If a child views a learning task as unsolvable, he/she quits before attempting the task.
- (b) Antecedent Attributions are long standing beliefs about the factors causing success and failure.
- (c) Program specific beliefs are beliefs about the factors causing success and failure in a particular task, such as reading comprehension.

Chapter Two

Theories of Learned Helplessness

Research on the alleviation and explanation of learned helplessness centers around attribution retraining, mindfulness, and theories of intelligence. Attribution retraining is a way to change how students think about their school achievement. If a student attributes success to luck, one goal of the attribution retraining program would be to help the student understand the role that hard work plays in affecting the outcome. Attribution retraining that combines effort and strategy use has demonstrated positive effects for students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities must understand that effort means trying hard and using the appropriate strategy. Moreover, students with learning disabilities must be made mindful of their effortful strategy use. Research involving mindfulness focuses on the idea that students must be made self-aware of the purpose of the strategy and how to use the strategy in diverse situations. This self-awareness facilitates transfer of the strategy from one situation to another. If a student fails to become mindful of a strategy, the student will be less likely to use a strategy and experience success in a new situation. Theories of intelligence explain why some students demonstrate helplessness behavior patterns. If students believe that intelligence is a fixed entity, they are more apt to develop performance goal orientations. If students with performance goal orientations have low confidence in their learning, they have a greater chance of experiencing learned helplessness. In contrast, students who view intelligence as a

malleable quantity are more apt to develop mastery goal orientations. A mastery goal orientation is associated with adaptive behavior patterns, such as perseverance through difficult tasks.

Attribution Retraining: Students Without Disabilities

One direction being pursued to alleviate learned helplessness is attribution retraining. The goal of attribution retraining is to change the way students think about their successes and failures. If students believe that their successes are due to external factors, such as luck, students are retrained to believe that the factors leading to success are effort and ability. In regard to academic failure, students are retrained to think that their failures are due to lack of effort but not due to lack of ability. For children receiving attribution retraining, they are expected to view failure as a cue to try something different; that is, to increase the amount of effort on a difficult task.

A number of studies investigated whether altering the attributions for failures would enable students with the helplessness profile to deal more effectively with difficult learning situations. Dweck (1975) conducted a study to determine whether changing the helpless child's attribution of failure in the domain of mathematics would improve academic performance. Twelve extremely helpless subjects between the ages of eight and thirteen were randomly placed in one of two experimental treatment groups: The Success Only treatment group and the Attribution Retraining treatment group. In the Success Only Treatment group, the subjects were given mathematical problems during twenty-five sessions that could be successfully

completed in a given amount of time. In this treatment, a subject's success was attributed to the response given and any failure was completely ignored. In the Attribution Retraining Treatment group, the procedure differed from the Success Only Treatment group by two variables: the number of failures and the attributions for failure. Regarding the first variable, for twenty percent of the success trials, the number of problems that could successfully be completed were increased. In other words, the number of problems to be solved clearly exceeded the amount of time allotted. In reference to the second variable, failure to complete the mathematical problems during the time allotted was verbally attributed by the trainer to insufficient effort but not lack of ability. Both groups' performances were measured by pretraining, midtraining, and posttraining tests.

The effects of the Attribution Retraining Treatment showed significant changes in the subjects' recognition of effort as a determinant of failure. The children who were retrained to think that failure was caused by insufficient effort were able to persist during the posttraining tests. Additionally, these children did not exhibit debilitating behavior, such as withdrawal, that is indicative of a learned helplessness profile. Most importantly, failure was now viewed as an indicator that more effort was needed to successfully complete a math problem. In contrast, the Success Only Treatment group displayed debilitating behavior following failure. On the posttraining test, the helpless subjects experienced test anxiety and gave themselves poor self-evaluations.

Furthermore, the helpless behavior of this group persisted even when these children experienced a higher rate of success.

In a second study, Fowler and Penelope (1981) showed increases in reading persistence with a treatment that combined attribution retraining and partial reinforcement. Twenty-eight helpless children from a rural middle class community, ages nine through thirteen, were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups: Treatment N1, Treatment N3, Treatment N3AR, and Treatment N3DAR. In first treatment group, Treatment N1, subjects were given sixteen sentences to read, ten of which contained words that were within the subjects the child's reading ability while six sentences, contained 3 words beyond the subject's reading ability. In the second experimental group, N3, subjects experienced identical conditions to N1; however, the sentences were different each day to control for patterning effects. In the third experimental group, N3AR, subjects received the same schedule as the N3 group but experienced indirect attribution retraining. When subjects read a sentence correctly, the subjects were told, "That was very good". However, when the subjects incorrectly read a sentence, the subjects were told, "No, you didn't get that. That means you need to try harder." In contrast, subjects in the N3DAR treatment group, listened to a tape recording of a boy or girl saying, "I got it right. That means I tried hard" and "No, I didn't get it right. That means I have to try harder" (p. 255). Additionally, subjects in this group practiced saying the statements aloud, and eventually, silently to themselves, using their own words.

The results of this study indicated that partial reinforcement was an important variable in attribution retraining. Helpless students, who received direct attribution retraining with multiple practices with failure, persisted longer in reading difficult passages. When the multiple practices included direct attribution retraining, students demonstrated an increase in persistence in reading through difficult passages. This study confirmed that children should be trained in how to cope with failure. However, any program aimed at reducing learned helplessness must include multiple failure experiences.

In sum, both studies lend support for the use of attribution retraining as a way to minimize the debilitating effects of learned helplessness. In the first study, Dweck (1975) demonstrated that attribution retraining could alter helplessness in the domain of mathematics. As well as altering helpless students' attribution patterns in the domain of reading, the study by Fowler and Penelope (1981) emphasized a critical point worth noting; that is, students must experience multiple instances of failure during attribution retraining. A limitation for this line of research is the idea that simply telling someone to try harder is not always a way to increase success and reduce helplessness. Many students need to be shown what they can do to try harder. Another limitation involves the lack of learner diversity. The majority of these studies are promising for students without learning disabilities but fail to provide information about the effects of attribution retraining for students with learning disabilities.

Attribution Retraining: Students with Disabilities

A second line of research involves attribution retraining with a focus on effortful strategy use. Similarly, the goal is to change students' beliefs so that they attribute their successes to effort and ability and their failures to lack of effort. However, this line of research places a greater emphasis on trying hard by using the appropriate strategy. The concept behind this model is the belief that children with learning disabilities have experienced much failure in academic tasks, even though they have put forth much effort. These children must understand the relationship between trying hard, using a strategy, and doing well. This approach suggests that attributing failure to lack of effort may exacerbate, rather than alleviate, learned helplessness in some students who are already putting forth much effort. Perhaps, some students must be retrained to think that task failure is indicative of failure to try an effective task strategy.

Borkowski, Wehing, and Carr (1988) conducted a study that enhanced reading comprehension in students with learning disabilities by attribution retraining. The goal of this research was to change students' antecedent beliefs about the causes of their own learning failures. Borkowski et al., (1988) defined antecedent beliefs as long term beliefs that become entrenched in the students. Antecedent beliefs "evolve from a long history of repeated success or failure experiences, coupled with explanations, praise, or recriminations from significant others as parents and teachers" (p.46). This study investigated whether antecedent attributions could be altered

through a model that combined motivation and metacognition. Furthermore, the goal of this study was to understand how program-specific attributions affect antecedent attributions. Program specific attributions or short term beliefs, are relatively easy to change and are domain specific.

A sample of seventy-five upper elementary students with learning disabilities was placed in four groups, with two groups being experimental and two control. Students in the first experimental group, the Reading Strategies Plus Complex Attribution, received multiple instructional training: sort recall and paired associate learning, the use of summarization strategies, and program specific attribution retraining. Students in the second experimental group, Reading Strategies Plus Attribution, received an identical treatment except that the attribution retraining was only presented with the summarization strategy. Students in the first control group, Attribution Control, received strategy instruction without attribution retraining. Students in the second control group, Reading Strategies Control, received neither attribution retraining nor strategy instruction. In the Reading Strategic Plus Complex Attribution group, the attribution retraining consisted of dialogues in which the trainer modeled to students positive self-attributions while receiving training in sort recall and paired association learning. Additionally, subjects in his group received instruction in three strategies to enhance reading comprehension. The strategies focused on using main ideas and details, topic sentences, and summaries as way to aid comprehension. Students were also informed that effortful strategy use would

increase their ability to comprehend. While the students implemented the strategies, the trainer intentionally made an error and verbalized the positive self-attribution, "I need to try and use the strategy." When the trainer was successful in picking out a topic sentence, for instance, the trainer modeled the self-talk, "I tried hard, used the strategy, and did well". Posttests and pretests on reading comprehension and antecedent beliefs were given to all groups. Antecedent beliefs were measured by asking subjects to react to eight hypothetical situations common to grade school children. After reading a situation, the subjects were asked, for instance, to rate the degree to which effort, task difficulty, or luck were responsible for the outcome.

The results of this study indicated a substantial improvement in reading skills in both attribution retraining groups. These subjects improved approximately fifty percent in summarizing paragraphs, with a six-month improvement in inferencing ability for main ideas in short paragraphs. However, subjects in the Reading Strategies Plus Complex group did not significantly differ in reading comprehension and antecedent attributions when compared to the Reading Strategies Plus Treatment Group. Antecedent attributions remained stable over time and proved to be resistant to alteration. In other words, receiving attribution training over multiple instances did not significantly change students long standing beliefs about the causes of successes and failure. Thus, attribution retraining with a focus on effortful strategy improved strategy use in program-specific training but did not alter antecedent attribution in students with learning disabilities.

In sum, attribution retraining, with a focus on effortful strategy use, seems promising for helpless students with learning disabilities. Borkowski et al.'s (1988) model takes into account that merely telling these students to try harder may actually increase maladaptive behavior. Many students with learning disabilities try extremely hard when working through difficult problems. Consequently, telling these students to put forth effort, without an emphasis on strategy use, will not increase the students' chances of success. Borkowski et al.'s (1988) study demonstrated the significance of attribution retraining that includes a strategic processing component to learning. Instructions in both strategies and personal beliefs about causality were instrumental in reducing helplessness.

Mindfulness

A third line of research to enhance achievement with students with learning disabilities focuses on strategy use coupled with mindfulness. Here the goal is to induce mindfulness in order to mediate strategy transfer from one domain to another. Mindfulness is defined as "a state of mind involving volitional, metacognitively guided employment of non-automatic usually effort demanding processes" (Wong, 1994, p. 111). In other words, mindfulness is the mind's self-awareness and self-direction of using a particular strategy. Often, students with a helplessness profile, as well as other learners, learn a given strategy yet fail to generalize the use of the strategy in different situations. However, in this line of research, the question that arises is how do we persuade children to put forth the necessary effort to become

mindful of any given strategy (Wong, 1994). Clearly, students must have the will to learn any given strategy and direct and focus cognitive resources (Wong, 1994).

Since children with learning disabilities, who possess a helplessness profile, believe that learning outcomes are out of their control, these children are less likely to become mindful of using any learning strategy. Borkowski, Estrada, Milstead, and Hale (1989) view a helplessness profile as problematic since it often impedes strategy learning, mindfulness, and subsequent transfer. Wong (1994) has suggested a plausible way to motivate children with a learned helplessness profile in becoming mindful and effortful in implementing strategies. This approach is to explore with students their ideas of intelligence.

Theories of Intelligence: Performance versus Mastery Learning

Implicit theories of intelligence explain how children's beliefs about their intelligence affect their responses to different goals. One implicit theory of intelligence is that intelligence is a fixed entity. A child with this view believes that the amount of intelligence one possesses is stable over time. This belief--that intelligence is fixed--produces a framework in which children interpret and react to academic events. Dweck and Leggett (1988) proposed that this particular framework, that of a static view of intelligence, orients the students toward a performance goal orientation.

Students who have performance goal orientations are concerned with documenting their ability level. According to Heyman and Dweck, (1992), performance goals

“create a vulnerability to a helpless motivational reaction; failure implies low ability so the challenges that could potentially reveal inadequate ability are avoided, and the occurrence of failure often leads to debilitation”(p.233).

Dweck (1986) has found that students who possess a performance goal orientation and high confidence in their present ability will show patterns of seeking challenges and high persistence. Students who possess a performance goal orientation but have low confidence in ability will demonstrate a helpless behavior pattern. As Licht and Dweck (1984) stated about helplessness: “...children with a helpless attributional style are less able to cope when they encounter difficulties in intellectual achievement situations. Thus, a helpless pattern entails avoidance of any challenges and a low persistence in achieving goals, especially in cognitive areas such as math and science. Yet regardless of the confidence level, a student with a performance goal orientation is highly concerned with obtaining good grades and high-test scores. Furthermore, some of these students strive to be best in the class and outperforming others (Dweck, 1986).

A second implicit theory of intelligence portrays intelligence as a malleable quantity. Children who adopt this view believe that the amount of intelligence one possesses can be changed over time. Students who view intelligence as changeable are oriented toward a mastery goal. These children are focused on learning as opposed to performing well. This orientation enables children to be self-monitoring when working through difficult tasks. Most important, children with a mastery goal

orientation attribute their success or failure to the amount of effort placed into a task, not to their level of ability (Hokoda & Fincham, 1995). Subsequently, this type of goal is categorized as an adaptive motivational pattern because children who display this orientation do not become easily discouraged when confronted with challenging tasks. Dweck (1986) stated, "Children with the adaptive motivational pattern...seem undaunted or even seem to have their performance facilitated by the increased challenge" (p. 1041). A mastery goal orientation, thus, offers a student adaptive strategies to utilize when confronted with difficult and challenging school tasks.

In sum, past research has described two motivational patterns that children exhibit in challenging academic experiences. First, some students believe that intelligence can be increased by gaining new knowledge. Consequently, these students may be more open to putting forth more effort in becoming mindful of learning a new strategy to use in a challenging learning situation. Second, children who exhibit learned helplessness in difficult learning situations often view intelligence as fixed. Consequently, these students may not believe that putting forth effort in learning a new strategy will pay any dividends in the outcome. Thus, these students do not make any concerted effort to become mindful of any strategies.

Conclusion

Attribution retraining, along with a focus on strategy use, can have a positive impact on children who have a helplessness profile. Moreover, the research on mindfulness has shown how to mediate strategy transfer from one domain to another.

However, a problem with attribution retraining and mindfulness has to do with children who no longer demonstrate the will to learn. Children with learning disabilities who no longer are willing to put forth the necessary effort to learn a new strategy may not receive the benefits of these treatments. Consequently, one possible venue to restore the will to learn may be to explore children's beliefs about intelligence. If children adopt the belief that intelligence can be increased by trying hard and using a particular strategy, children may be more responsive toward learning a new strategy. At the least, the research that explores with children their beliefs about intelligence may influence their learning goal orientation and alter their maladaptive patterns.

Chapter Three

Methods

Educators face a serious problem in attempting to teach students with a learned helplessness profile. Motivational researchers have long recognized that factors other than ability affect whether students persist through difficult learning tasks. In the past, motivational researchers focused on such factors, such as the amount of teacher praise, to explain why some children failed to persist while performing difficult tasks. Today, many motivational researchers explain students' success and failure through goal theory.

Goal theory provides a conceptual framework that offers insight into why some students acquire a learned helplessness profile (Blumenfeld, 1992). Students with a learned helplessness profile often possess a performance goal orientation. They are concerned with obtaining good grades and gaining favor from peers and teachers. Moreover, students with a learned helplessness profile often adhere to a belief that intelligence is fixed. A student with this belief attributes their failure to the lack of ability. In contrast, students who possess a learning goal orientation are concerned with learning and gaining knowledge. These students adhere to the view that intelligence is incremental rather than fixed. By putting forth more effort, a student can acquire more knowledge and become more intelligent.

Researchers involved in reducing learned helplessness have focused on three strategies. One strategy involved attribution retraining. This direction involved

teaching students to attribute their failures to lack of effort. Although this direction had positive affects with students without learning disabilities, this direction of research was problematic for some students with learning disabilities. If a student with learning disabilities has a helplessness profile, telling this student to try even more hard may actually exacerbate rather than alleviate the problem. Consequently, a second line of attribution research evolved which focused on effortful strategy use. The goal of this research was to emphasize to students that trying hard by using the appropriate strategy positively affected learning outcomes. Furthermore, researchers believed that students must be made mindful in order to mediate strategy transfer from one domain to another.

Although attribution retraining with effortful strategy use and mindfulness seemed promising for students with learning disabilities, an important question remained unanswered: How do we motivate students with a learned helplessness profile to become mindful of any new strategy if they lack the volition to learn? One possible solution is to explore with these students their ideas of intelligence. If students with a helplessness profile are exposed to a new way of talking to themselves about intelligence, these students may be more open and mindful of learning new strategies.

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study were high school students with learning disabilities. Each participant was interviewed, as well as observed in the classroom setting. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants.

The first participant was an eighteen-year old African American high school senior, who attended an urban school. At the time of this study, Johnny (a pseudonym) had learning disabilities in language and mathematics. On the Wide Range Achievement Test, Johnny scored at the fifth-grade level in mathematics and the sixth-grade level in reading. He had dreams of playing college football but viewed his learning problems as an obstacle to this aspiration. Many universities that were interested in recruiting him for football shied away from him after they inquired into his grades. Johnny was well liked by his peers. He participated on the high school football team this year but was temporarily sidelined due to injury. This participant was chosen because his school behavior was indicative of the learned helplessness profile. Whenever a task became too difficult, Johnny most always quit and, thus, failed to take up any academic challenges. Consequently, Johnny appeared to lack the volition to learn any concept that he viewed as beyond his learning capacity.

The second participant was a seventeen-year old Caucasian student who attended school in a residential setting for troubled youth. Barbara (a pseudonym) was identified as having learning disabilities in reading and mathematics. On the Wide Range Achievement Test, Barbara scored at the third-grade level in mathematics, reading, and spelling. Barbara's career goal was to go to college and become a counselor for troubled youth. She was very friendly, well liked, and respected by her peers. In less than a year, Barbara planed on living independently with another

student. Similar to the Johnny, Barbara's classroom behavior was indicative of the learned helplessness profile.

Conceptual Framework.

Helmstetter (1982) conceptualized a self-talk model as a way to produce change in the way people think about themselves. Helmstetter views self-talk as a way to override a person's "past programming by erasing or replacing it with conscious, positive new directions" (p. 72). Helmstetter compares the brain to a sponge. He believes that the brain will soak in and believe anything it is told by oneself or others. Unfortunately, the brain accepts and believes even lies, especially if the lies are told many times and in a vigorous manner.

According to Helmstetter, there exists a process by which success and failure in controlling lives occurs. He has conceptualized this process in a five-step self-management sequence: behavior, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and programming. The first step that most directly influences a person's success or failure is behavior. Behavior comprises what people do and determines whether they will be successful. As stated by Helmstetter, "the correct actions will always end up making things work better than the wrong series of the wrong actions" (p. 63). For example, if a student fails to pay attention in class or skips school, the student will most likely fail in school. The second step involves filtering a person's behavior through one's feelings that directly influences the specific actions taken. Helmstetter states that if a person feels good about something, the feelings will positively affect how something is done.

The third step involves a person's attitudes. Attitudes are the perspectives through which life is viewed. Helmstetter states that attitude affects feelings, which in turn affect behavior. Furthermore, Helmstetter views a positive attitude as an essential ingredient to success in learning. The fourth step involves a person's beliefs about anything. Beliefs affect attitudes, feelings, and actions, which in turn, influence whether a person fails or succeeds. The fifth step of the model involves the programmed information that is received from the environment. A person is conditioned from birth onward, and the majority of what is believed about oneself is firmly programmed. Thus, a person's successes and failures can logically be explained through the program that sets up one's beliefs.

The question that arises from the five-step management program is this: If the majority of students' successes and failures are largely determined by their programs, how can students' programs, consisting largely of helplessness beliefs, be replaced? Helmstetter believes that self-talk can give a positive direction to a person's subconscious mind by talking to oneself in a different way. According to Helmstetter, the self-talk model paints a new "internal picture of ourselves as we would most like to be" (p. 72).

The self-talk model has five levels, with the lowest level representing the most harmful type of talk. Level one is called the level of Negative Acceptance. Level one self-talk represents the bad and awful statements that one says about oneself and believes. Surprisingly, Helmsetter found level one self-talk as the most utilized form

of self-talk used. Examples of level one self-talk are: (a) I wish I could but I can't, (b) I can't, and (c) I just don't know. These types of statements are often made aloud by helplessness learners. Level one self-talk wreaks trouble in a student's life. It turns self-confidence into self-doubt and chaos. Level two is called the level of Recognition and Need to Change. Examples of level two self-talk are: (a) I ought to, (b) I should, and (c) I need to. Level two self-talk are directives which show a recognition of a problem but fail to offer any solutions. Level three is called the Decision to Change. Not only does a person recognize that a problem exists, but the person makes a decision to do something about it. Helmstetter states that a person moving into this stage begins to rephrase past negative programming. Reprogramming the mind occurs by stating words in a positive direction that informs your subconscious mind to make the change. Examples of level three self-talk are: (a) I never quit when trying to solve a problem, (b) I no longer put off doing my homework, and (c) I no longer think I am dumb. Level four is called The Better You. At level four, a person is completing a perfectly new picture of the self. Helmstetter states that level four strengthens the spirit to persevere through difficult situations, such as those involved in learning. Examples of level four self-talk are: (a) I am organized in school, (b) I can be successful in school, and (c) I can use a strategy to solve this problem. Level five self-talk is called the level of Universal Affirmation. Few people transcend this level. Those who do are no longer in need the self-talk program. They use language that speaks of unity of spirit and a "timeless cosmic

affinity” (p. 80). Examples of level five self-talk are: (a) It is one with the universe, (b) I am one with the universe, and (c) the universe is one with me.

Intervention

After each interview, the participants were informed about the incremental view of intelligence. Moreover, the participants were introduced to Helmstetter’s model of self-talk. The participants were informed of the role that self-talk about intelligence plays in success and failure. Additionally, the participants were informed of the use of self-talk about intelligence as a way to combat helplessness.

Measurement Instruments

Interview questions are organized into five categories. Category one was titled How Parents Define You as a Learner. The questions within this category helped determine what type of beliefs about their children may have been transmitted to the child. Furthermore, these questions were asked to determine the participants’ ideas on intelligence and the role of self-talk in their learning. Category two was titled Child’s Learning View of Self. The questions within this category helped determine what ideas the participant had about his/her learning. Additionally, this category helped determine what the participants attributed their successes and failures to. Category three was titled Participant’s View of Success. The questions within this category helped determine what factors the participants believed were most important for being a successful person. Furthermore, these questions were asked to determine what type of learning goal the participants had. Category four was titled Ideas of

Intelligence. The questions within this category helped determine the participant's views on intelligence. Category five was titled Self-talk. The questions within this category helped determine what type of internal picture that the participant has painted of himself/herself as a learner. Participants were tape recorder in order to ensure accuracy of their responses.

Category One: How parents define you as a learner.

(1) If your parent was asked to describe you as learner, how would he/she respond?

(a) High ability

(b) Moderate ability

(c) Low ability.

(2) If you told your parent you were failing a class, how do you think he/she would respond?

(3) What would your parent attribute your failing to?

(a) The material to learn was too difficult for my child but he/she tried hard.

(b) The material to learn was not too difficult for my child but my child tried very little.

(c) My child is not very smart in school.

Category Two: Child's learning view of self

(1) Describe yourself as a learner.

(2) Tell me about a class that you were failing. What do you see as the reason that caused you to fail?

Category Three: Participant's View of Success

- (1) Imagine a classmate who is successful in academics. What is the most important factor leading to this success?
- (2) What is most important to you?
 - a) Getting good grades
 - b) Gaining new knowledge

Category Four:

- (1) Can people get smarter or are they stuck with the intelligence that they were born with? If yes, how does a person go about getting smarter?
- (2) Imagine a classmate who consistently fails a class, such as math. What could this person do to become smarter in this subject?
- (3) Do you believe that each person is born with a fixed amount of ability?
- (4) What are you really good at?
- (5) In regard to this area, what statement do you see most true about yourself?
 - (a) I was born with the natural ability in this area.
 - (b) I practiced a lot in this area, making me successful
- (6) Imagine a person who is failing a class. The parent tells the child to try harder. The child maintains that he/she is already trying harder and there is nothing more that he/she can do. What do you think about the child's remark to the parent?
- (7) Imagine a person is continuously failing in a subject. This person maintains that he/she can do. What do you think about the child's remark to the parent?

Category Five: Self-talk

- (1) Do you know what self-talk is?
- (2) What do you generally tell yourself when you are trying to solve a problem but can't solve it?
- (3) Are you more likely to tell yourself that you are dumb or smart, while working through a difficult problem?
- (4) Do you believe that what you say to yourself during learning plays an important factor in the learning outcome?

Procedures

Selection of the participants. The interviewer relied on teacher observations and comments in selecting the participants. In the urban high school, one participant was selected out of twenty-five students. In the residential setting, one participant was selected out of twelve students. One hour was spent talking to each teacher about the characteristics of students with the helplessness profile. Each classroom teacher was provided with the following characteristics of a helpless learner: (a) the student gives up easily when undertaking difficult tasks; (b) the student shows signs of extreme frustration, such as, acting up in class or withdrawing from class participation; (c) the student does not attempt to use any learning strategy that is suggested by the teacher; and (d) the student does not attempt to complete class assignments. Additionally, the teacher was asked to include the following factor in the identification of a helpless student: the student identified as a helpless learner must be at least two or more years

behind in an academic subject. Each teacher selected one participant that met the criteria of a helpless learner.

The interviewer contacted both students to set up a good time to meet. Depending on the day of each interview, the interviewer met each participant at his/her home or an alternative meeting place, which was decided by the interviewer and participant ahead of time. The interviewer introduced herself to the participant, and provided him/her with background information about the project and the interviewing procedure. The interviewer assured the participant that he/she could drop out at any time during the interview, if he/she felt the need to do so. The interviewer also assured the participant that his/her identity would not be known to anyone except the individual who was conducting the study.

Informal Observation/Interview. The participants were observed in the classroom. Specifically, the interviewer observed how the child responded to the teacher while undertaking a challenging task. Moreover, the interviewer observed how each participant reacted to the teacher's request to complete an assignment. Due to time constraints, the interviewer made one classroom visit. Both participants were interviewed after school.

Results

Classroom observation. Johnny was identified as a helpless and struggling learner, who often displayed behavior associated with a helplessness profile. For example, Johnny was observed being shown by his teacher a strategy for adding fractions with

unlike denominators. Johnny stated he was stupid in math and refused to pay attention to her. Johnny did not accept the teacher's help and failed to complete the math problems in the allotted time provided. Similarly, Barbara's behavior reflected a helplessness profile. Barbara was observed during a reading class. She refused to try and read a paragraph from a book that contained many multisyllabic words. Despite encouragement from the teacher, Barbara insisted that she could not successfully decode the words. Barbara closed the book, thus, failing to read and participate with the class.

Interview questions. In the analysis of the interview responses, the interviewer examined what views each learner had on intelligence. Furthermore, the interviewer examined how the participant talked to himself/herself while experiencing school failure. Lastly, the interviewer talked to the participant about the relationship between self-talk and failure by introducing them to Helmstetter's self-talk model. The participants' responses were analyzed through qualitative methods.

Participant one: Johnny. In regard to Category One: How Parents Define You as a Learner, Johnny stated that his mother regards him as having moderate ability in academics. If he told his mother that he was failing a class, Johnny's mom would ask him why he is failing the class. Also, his mom would ask him why he isn't doing the work?" Johnny stated that his mom would think that the work was too difficult for him.

In regard to Category Two: Child's View of Self, Johnny described himself as a slow learner. Johnny stated, "I don't catch on to things very easily, especially in mathematics. Someone has to sit down and show me step-by-step how to do the work. My teachers don't help me the way they should. I get so frustrated that I act like I don't care. I put my headphones on in class and go to sleep." When asked how teachers responded to his class sleeping patterns, Johnny responded, "My teachers don't care. I guess they're happy that I'm out of their way and not causing problems." He recently told his mother that he was failing in mathematics. When asked why he was failing math, he responded, "I am not very smart in Algebra and my teachers don't help me." When asked if he recalled ever being successful in math, he stated that math has always been hard for him.

In regard to Category Three: Participant's View of Success, Johnny was asked to imagine a classmate being successful in a subject. When asked to identify the most important factor leading to success, Johnny replied, "The person is really intelligent and likes to learn." Johnny further stated that it was more important to get good grades than to gain new knowledge.

In regard to Category Four: Ideas of Intelligence, Johnny stated that some people are born with good skills, such as in mathematics. He stated that he was very good in government and sports. When I asked him to explain the factors making him good in these areas, Johnny stated that he was born with the natural ability in sports and government. Johnny was asked to respond to a scenario in which a friend was failing

a class and the mother kept telling the students to try harder. Johnny stated that this scenario was similar to what happens between his mom and himself. He felt that the friend had every right to be frustrated. Additionally, he stated that some kids just don't get math, like him. If a student states that he/she is dumb due to numerous school failures, Johnny said that he would tell that person that he/she is not dumb. Furthermore, Johnny thought that this person just had a difficult time understanding the material.

In regard to Category Five: Self-Talk, Johnny gave the following self-talk statements that he generally tells himself when working through a difficult problem: "I don't get it.", "I don't understand what to do.", and "I feel dumb because I can't do the work.." Additionally, he stated that he is more likely to tell himself that he is dumb when working on a difficult problem. When asked if he believed that what you say to yourself played an important factor in learning, he stated that he never thought about the role of self-talk in school. Furthermore, no one ever told him or taught him how to use self-talk as a way to get through difficult learning experiences. However, Johnny stated that during football, he continuously told himself positive self-talk statements, such as, "I am going to score and catch every ball.", "Don't give up.", "We can win the game.", and "Today, I am going to score the most touchdowns." "The scouts are going to think I'm great."

Participant two: Barbara. In regard to Category One: How Parents Define You as a Learner, Barbara stated that her mom described her as having high ability. If she

was failing a class, her mom would ask her why and help her figure out how to pass the class. Also, her mom would be apt to think that the material was too difficult for Barbara, and that Barbara tried her hardest.

In regard to Category Two: Child's View of Self, Barbara described herself as "one that learns through listening and can't learn from reading." The classes that she remembered failing were eighth-grade spelling and reading. She stated that she could not keep up with the work. She felt dumb and very frustrated. When asked what behavior she displayed when frustrated, Barbara stated, "I drop everything", "I just sit and don't talk", and "I usually end up getting in arguments with anyone in the class."

In regard to Category Three: Participant's View of Success, Barbara described a successful classmate as someone who has high ability and self-esteem. To Barbara, it was more important to gain new knowledge than obtain good grades.

In regard to Category Four: Ideas of Intelligence, Barbara believed that people can get smarter by reading books. If a classmate was failing a subject, Barbara believed that this person should keep trying and not give up. In reference to whether a person is born with a fixed amount of intelligence, Barbara believes that people are born with a certain amount of ability in an area. Barbara stated that she is indicative of someone born with a fixed disability, that of dyslexia. She further noted that dyslexia did not magically come upon her when she was older. Consequently, Barbara believed that she was born with this trait. Likewise, Barbara believed that a person who is good at

math must have been born with this ability. Barbara stated that she is good at paying attention and science. She never liked science before but this year it is her favorite subject. When asked to imagine someone failing a subject, and who had a parent--who kept telling that child to try harder--Barbara would tell the parent to loosen up. She felt that "kids can be trying really hard but no one can see it." If that person who was failing maintained that he/she was dumb, Barbara stated that the person should stop telling this to herself/himself. She believes that people need to believe in themselves and not think about themselves in a negative manner.

In regard to Category Five: Self-talk, Barbara told herself to keep trying when trying to solve a difficult problem. When she came across a reading word that she didn't know, Barbara talked to herself and tried to use the context of the story to decode the word. When asked whether she were more apt to tell herself that she was dumb or smart, Barbara responded, "I used to always tell myself I was dumb. My mom always told me I was dumb. Ever since I can remember, my mom told me I was dumb. That was all I ever heard. My friends called me dumb because I was in special education. My teachers told me I was dumb by giving such easy work. Whenever I told my teachers I couldn't do some problem, instead of helping me, they would give me baby work that was so easy." When asked whether she believed that self-talk played an important part in the outcome of learning, Barbara responded, "Yes. Before I used to tell myself I was dumb and stupid. I always felt so frustrated in school. Now I tell myself I can do it. I would never call someone dumb. For

example, if I called Sarah (her friend) dumb because she couldn't understand something, it might not bother her right away. However, let's say she got into a fight with someone the next day. Sarah might think, 'I'm dumb' because she heard it from me the day before, and Sarah would keep hearing those negative words about herself, and because she's having such a bad day, she would believe it." Barbara was then asked how she learned about the effects of self-talk. She responded, "That's a funny thing. My counselor asked me the same thing. I don't know what happened to me that made me think this way. I don't even know when I changed. All I know is that I don't tell myself that I'm dumb and stupid anymore." She acknowledged that she still gets very frustrated with learning; however, she stated that she no longer just sits at school and refuses to try. She further stated that her school behavior is much better. After explaining to Barbara the theory of self-talk as proposed by Helmstetter, Barbara was asked whether any teacher ever talked to her about the role of self-talk in learning. She stated that no one ever talked to her about self-talk. She wished that someone did. Barbara stated that she doesn't give up completely like she used to do in school. Now she has a way to cope with difficult learning situations.

Discussion

In regard to Category One: How Parents Define You as a Learner, both participants maintained that their moms believe they have at least average to above average ability in academics. Both Johnny and Barbara stated that their moms would attribute their failure in any academic subject to course difficulty. These types of parental

statements may have transmitted self-doubting beliefs to the participants about their abilities to persevere through difficult tasks. Since the participants heard parental statements attributing their child's failure to course difficulty, this may have translated to the participants that they lacked the ability to solve difficult problems. Additionally, both parents viewed their children as trying hard yet unable to successfully complete the course work. The parents may have communicated the dual message that effort played a minimal role compared to ability in solving difficult school problems.

In regard to Category Two: Child's View of Self, both participants described themselves as dumb and slow. The admission of not being smart suggests that both participants held a static view of intelligence. By stating that one is dumb, the participants are attributing their failure in school to lack of abilities. This stance on learning suggested that both participants failed to realize that one becomes more intelligent by learning new ideas and strategies for learning. Their static view of intelligence may explain why neither participant expressed any love of learning when describing themselves as learners. Furthermore, their descriptions as being "dumb learners" explained the helplessness behavior that both participants demonstrated in class. Johnny appeared to demonstrate his helplessness by sleeping in class. Similarly, Barbara appeared to demonstrate her helplessness by acting mean and defiant toward classmates and teachers.

In regard to Category Three: Participants view of success, both Johnny and Barbara pictured a successful candidate as someone possessing high ability. Since the participants have labeled themselves as dumb and, thereby, having low ability, they are programmed to believe that they will not be successful during challenging tasks. The participants' negative self-beliefs created a picture of failure instead of happiness and success. Helmstetter (1982) stated that the subconscious mind never questions what it is told. Since the participants have told their minds that successful classmates possess high abilities, inadvertently, they have unconsciously pictured themselves as low ability learners.

It is no wonder why these participants demonstrated helplessness and lacked the volition to learn. According to Helmstetter, "our internal programming treats anything we tell it with equal indifference" (p.55). As a result, if we tell our mind that we have low ability and are failures, "the internal programming will unleash its powerful control over the mental and physical selves to achieve the result it was told to accomplish" (p. 55). Had the participants pictured successful classmates as those who employed effortful strategy use, they would be more inclined to learn new strategies and experience success.

In regard to Category Four: Ideas of Intelligence, both participants acknowledged a belief that people are born with natural abilities in certain areas. Johnny illustrated this belief by referencing his natural ability to play sports. He admitted that practicing hard adds to his athletic talent; however, Johnny viewed natural ability as

the most important factor contributing to his success. Likewise, Johnny regarded people who are successful in mathematics as possessing natural ability in this domain. Although he recognized that paying attention in class and completing homework affects one's performance in mathematics, Johnny believed that natural ability is the most important factor.

Similarly, Barbara believes that intelligence is somewhat fixed. Her memories of learning are filled with thoughts of failure in both math and reading. She candidly spoke of her learning disability as a trait that she was born with. As Barbara poignantly stated, "My learning problems did not magically come upon me." Since Barbara believes that one can be born with a learning disability, it makes sense that she believes that people who are competent in something are born with the natural ability. Since Barbara has experienced tremendous frustration and little success at learning, she does not appear to believe that smartness can be gained by trying hard or through effortful strategy use.

Additionally, both candidates understand the frustration that a learner experiences when a teacher or parent insists that lack of effort is the reason contributing to failure. Both participants have received numerous messages that imply that they are not trying hard in school. These messages have an incredibly negative effect on their learning. Both participants view these messages as compounding an already frustrating experience; that of, not having the ability to achieve in school yet being expected to be successful by putting forth more effort.

In regard to Category Five: Self-Talk, both participants recalled telling themselves that they were dumb while trying to work through difficult school tasks. According to Helmstetter's model, Barbara and Johnny are at the level of Negative Acceptance. People who are at level one on the self-talk model question their own ability. Questioning one's ability to complete academic tasks wreaks havoc and self-doubt. Both participants told themselves that they were dumb, and they accepted it. Consequently, their beliefs that they were stupid determined their attitudes about learning and created feelings that directed their actions. Perhaps, Barbara responded to her level one self-talk by causing behavior disturbances in the class, whereas, Johnny chose to sleep in class. Both participants accepted from others that they were incapable of learning; consequently, these beliefs led to a chain reaction that led to unsuccessful management of their own learning. Thus, their programmed beliefs that intelligence is fixed is likely to have created attitudes, feelings, and behavior associated with a helplessness profile.

An important goal of this study was to help the participants recognize the barriers that level one self-talk creates for learning. Johnny understood the role of positive self-talk in playing sports. Before any game, he tells himself that he is going to catch every football thrown to him. However, his ability to use positive self-talk in sports did not transfer over to other domains, that of mathematics and reading. Interestingly, after discussing the relationship of level one self-talk in academic subjects and helplessness behavior, he expressed an interest in learning about ways to talk to

himself in school. Additionally, Johnny was informed about the incremental view of intelligence. He was told that many theorists believed that one becomes smarter by learning new things. Furthermore, many researchers believed that effort, along with strategy use, are vital ways in becoming more intelligent. He seemed really interested in learning about theories of intelligence and how his beliefs may have affected his behavior and school grades. Unfortunately, no one has ever taken the time to talk to Johnny about his views on intelligence and how one goes about getting smarter. For most of Johnny's schooling, he believed that he was dumb and incapable of being successful in mathematics.

Similar to Johnny, Barbara used level one self-talk throughout most her schooling. Barbara was painfully aware how people believed she was stupid and accepted this painted picture of herself as a learner. Barbara seemed to understand how self-talk directs the subconscious mind. She used the example of how negative self-talk statements made about a friend can later affect what the friend tells about herself and accepts. Also, Barbara seemed to realize how people unwittingly make statements about themselves that can negatively affect their behavior. Although she recognized the need to change, her view of intelligence may have impeded any significant behavior change. If Barbara believed that natural ability was the most important variable affecting success, she will continue to tell herself that she is less than capable of solving difficult math and reading problems due to her disabilities. Barbara also seemed interested in learning about theories of intelligence and Helmstetter's self-talk

model. She also wished that someone taught her about how one becomes intelligence. It seemed that Barbara felt a sense of relief when she was informed that intelligence could be increased by successfully employing learning strategies.

Summary

Previous research has shown that attribution retraining reduces the debilitating effects of helplessness with students without learning disabilities. However, researchers face a challenging problem when attempting to reduce helplessness in students with learning disabilities. Because of their repeated failures, some students with disabilities have lost the motivation to learn. Wong (1994) suggested a plausible way to reduce helplessness with this population; that of exploring their notions of smartness and theories of intelligence.

This research data suggested that exploring notions of intelligence, along with a reprogramming of self-talk, may foster a willingness to learn in students with learning disabilities. If you want to change how they view intelligence, one way is to educate students about theories of intelligence. Students must understand that intelligence may be increased by learning new strategies in order to solve challenging problems. However, understanding the theories of intelligence will not make significant changes if these students do not reprogram their thinking about intelligence. Unless replaced by new thinking, the negative programming will remain with students and possibly hinder new learning experiences. Moreover, the results of this study may be critical for students with learning disabilities. Because of their repeated failure, many

students with learning disabilities are programmed to think that they are dumb and incapable of learning. Consequently, the negative thoughts about themselves may serve as a barrier to learning new strategies.

Helmstetter suggested a way for students to reprogrammed their thinking; that of, self-talk. In sum, this research proposed a new direction in reducing helplessness in students with learning disabilities; that of exploring with students their notions of intelligence and reprogramming new ways of talking to oneself about intelligence. Empirical evidence is needed on the efficacy of this research.

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GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

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TITLE: AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-TALK PATTERNS

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1) SEM/YR COMPLETED: FALL, 1997

☐ Project
☒ Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Using the Eric thesaurus, choose as many descriptors (5-7 minimum) to describe the contents of your paper.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Performance goals | 6. Attribution retraining |
| 2. Mastery goals | 7. Mindfulness |
| 3. Helplessness | 8. Self-talk |
| 4. Motivation | 9. Intelligence |
| 5. Learning disabled | 10. Achievement |

ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper:

The relationship between students' beliefs about intelligence and the type of self-talk used was examined among students with learning disabilities who were identified as having a helplessness profile. The results indicated that teaching students about the incremental view of intelligence and self-talk model may enhance the will to learn.