SELF-DEPRECATING SELF-PRESENTATION STRATEGIES: MAINTAINING LOWER EXPECTATIONS

by
Desiree D. Ducsay

SUBMITTTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
AT NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

July 13, 2009

APPROVED BY: Derek L. Anderson, Ed.D.

DATE: July 17, 2009

Table of Contents

Abstract

High stakes testing brought on by recent legislation has increased the need to employ a performance goal atmosphere and compare to others. Students feeling pressure to compare well with others can lead to the use self-deprecating self-presentation strategies in an attempt to alleviate the pressure and minimize the effect on trait self-esteem. The repeated use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies can lead to a further decrease in self-esteem and academic progress, and can begin a cycle of failure that is difficult to break. The following research has been conducted in an attempt to identify causes, characteristics, effects, and possible preventions of the use of these strategies.

Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Self-presentation is "an effort to convey a desired image of oneself to others" (Park, Crocker, & Kiefer, 2007, p. 1504). People often try to convey an impression of themselves on others. A student may choose to convey a negative impression by using self-deprecating self-presentation strategies such as self-handicapping, sandbagging, and supplication for various reasons (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Students may exhibit these qualities due to embarrassment of being successful, the need for an excuse for failure, or to lower teacher expectations and goals in order to avoid higher standards (Midgley, Arunkumar, & Urdan, 1996).

All of these types of self-deprecating strategies lead teachers, parents, and peers to believe the student has a lower ability level which can inhibit student progress and increase failure (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). It is imperative to complete research in order to identify, prevent, and eliminate self-deprecating strategies with the intention of raising teachers' expectations of their students, as well as raising student self-expectations and goals.

Research Questions

Questions arise when reviewing research regarding self-deprecating self-presentation strategies. What student characteristics lead to the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies, and what can be done in classrooms to decrease these behaviors and increase motivation to learn?

Definition of Terms

Self-Presentation

Self-presentation is “an effort to convey a desired image of oneself to others” (Park, Crocker, & Keifer, 2007, p. 1505). People often try to convey an impression of themselves on others, be it positive or negative, in an attempt to increase self-esteem and prevent a negative impact on self-esteem (Brandt, Vonk, & Knippenberg, 2009). Also known as impression management, self-presentation can involve many strategies (Lewis & Neighbor, 2005).

Self-Deprecating Strategies

A student intentionally portraying a negative impression of their self is known as a self-deprecating self-presentation (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Self-deprecating strategies are often exhibited by students with low self-esteem or low self expectations and who choose to remove responsibility from their own actions and abilities and place them on external sources (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Self-Handicapping

A self-deprecating self-presentations strategy a student may exhibit is self-handicapping. Self-handicapping is the act of hindering the possibility of success by choosing to exhibit behaviors which will increase their chances of failure (Urdan & Midgley, 2001). A student may procrastinate, reduce effort, stay up late, etc. to decrease their odds of success in hopes of providing an excuse for failure (Martin, Marsh, & Debus, 2001).

Sandbagging

When a student leads someone to believe they are less capable than they actually are, it is considered sandbagging (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). The purpose of sandbagging in an academic setting is for a student to lead teachers and peers to believe the student is less capable; hence teachers and peers will have lower expectations for the student (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). With

lower expectations, there is less pressure to perform well at the time of an assignment or test and in future performance situations (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Supplication

Another self-presentation strategy a student may employ is supplication. Supplication is the act of presenting and exaggerating weaknesses in order to evoke sympathy and assistance from others more capable (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Supplication can lead to a student receiving assistance in excess, and the student passing on their responsibilities to others and inhibiting progress (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Students who use this strategy may be seen as dependent and lazy (Christopher et. al., 2005).

Impersonal Orientation

An impersonal orientation occurs when a person feels that outcomes are beyond their control (Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996). Goals are personally unattainable and the outcomes are left to chance (Hodgins et. al., 1996).

Control Orientation

A control orientation occurs when a person tends to attribute decisions to extrinsic motivators (Hodgins et. al., 1996). External pressures to perform motivate behaviors and actions in persons with a control orientation (Hodgins et. al., 1996; Knee & Zuckerman, 1998).

Autonomy Orientation

A person who exhibits autonomy-oriented behaviors tend to be motivated by personal choices and needs (Hodgins et. al., 1996; Knee & Zuckerman, 1998). They feel that their decisions have a direct effect on their goals and aspirations and feel more responsible for outcomes (Hodgins et. al., 1996).

Mastery Goal

Mastery goals, also known as task goals, are based on individual student improvement (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Urdan, Midgley, & Anderman, 1998). Students seek to master new skills and make improvements as compared to their own previous achievements (Kaufman & Dodge, 2009).

Performance Goal

Performance goals focus primarily on comparing with the ability of others, and are sometimes called ability goals (Corpus et. al., 2009; Urdan et. al., 1998). Being seen as capable and having the expectation to do as well as, or better than peers as based on effort in the classroom or standardized tests are qualities of a performance goal oriented classroom (Corpus et. al., 2009; Ames & Archer, 1988).

Chapter II: Review of Literature

An increased pressure to improve achievement test scores related to the No Child Left Behind Act has led to a high stakes testing and performance goal atmosphere (Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008). When a student feels less adequate than their peers due to low self-esteem or previous failure, they may be more likely to employ self-deprecating self-presentation strategies (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Three forms of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies will be discussed in the review; self-handicapping, sandbagging, and supplication.

Causes and Possible Effects of Performance Goal Orientation

Research suggests that different types of classroom goal structures may promote self-presentation strategies. Two main goal structures are mastery goals, also known as task goals, and performance goals, also known as ability goals (Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Urdan et. al., 1998). The implementation of No Child Left Behind has placed an emphasis on standardized testing, which in turn leads to an emphasis on performance goals (Ciani et. al., 2008). With increased pressure and accountability, teachers have been influenced to use a performance goal orientation in their classroom to keep up with competitive standardized testing (Ciani et. al., 2008).

Ciani, Summers, and Easter conducted a quantitative study in an attempt to identify some of the classroom structure effects of legislative requirements, and teachers' feelings regarding these effects (2008). One hundred fifty-six teachers with at least six years of teaching experience from four Midwestern suburban or semi-rural public high schools participated in the study, with the smallest school containing 350 students and the largest containing 1600 students. Teachers completed surveys during professional development days, with the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative Teacher Survey which measured teachers' feelings of school community and the

Collective Efficacy Scale (Ciani et. al., 2008). A portion of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales was administered to identify performance and mastery goal orientations for the school as a whole, as well as in individual classrooms, and the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale measured teachers' personal feelings of their teaching strategies effectiveness and abilities to motivate students (Ciani et. al., 2008).

A one way ANOVA with the school being considered the independent variable, and teachers' perceptions being the independent variable, three of the high schools were considered of high performance goal orientation, and the one with the lowest median, below 3.33, was labeled as having a low performance goal orientation (Ciani et. al., 2008). After conducting a one way MANOVA, a significant Wilks's lambda = .69, $F(8, 130) = 7.31$, $p < .001$, partial $g2 = .31$ was identified. Univariate tests showed teachers in the high performance oriented school group provided significantly lower mean scores for self-efficacy (M=6.09 vs. 6.30), teaching strategies (M=7.24 vs. 7.92) and classroom management (M=7.32 vs. 7.65), and a lower feeling of collective efficacy (M=4.04 vs. 4.52) and teacher community (M=4.01-4.54) (Ciani et. al., 2008). Although one of the schools was identified as having a low performance goal orientation, that particular school only indicated slightly higher use of a mastery goal classroom structure (Ciani et. al., 2008).

In the areas of teacher community and school efficacy, a positive relationship was discovered with the addition of a positive relationship of the two to teacher self-efficacy (Ciani et. al., 2008). These relationships were found to be negatively associated to performance goal structures, and positively related to mastery goal structures when conducting a path analysis (Ciani et. al., 2008). Ciani, Summers, and Easter's findings suggest that a primary focus on increasing standardized test scores to reach new state and federal requirements can lead to less of

a feeling of community and self-efficacy among teachers (2008). Performance goal orientations in school communities leads to feelings of academic competition among students and leads teachers to use strategies that employ performance goals to prepare for tests (Ciani et. al., 2008). Lower motivation has also been related to reports of high performance school goal structures (Ciani et. al., 2008).

Ciani, Summers, and Easter's findings are helpful in recognizing the pattern occurring in high schools today (2008). An emphasis on teaching to the test and performance goals has led to more external motivations and to teachers feeling less confident in their abilities, and students' feeling less confident when compared to others more capable (Ciani et. al., 2008). Self-efficacy for instructional strategies had a significant positive relationship to mastery-oriented classroom goals, which may be a possible reason for the opposite occurrence where teachers feel limited in their teaching strategies and focus only on the material covered on the standardized test, and use mostly lecture as a teaching strategy, and worksheets and tests as assessments for learning (Ciani, et. al., 2008).

Further research may be interesting to survey teachers and students in a variety of schools. With new state requirements, such as the Michigan Merit Curriculum and Exam and the use of the ACT as a standardized assessment, the incidence of performance goals may be higher in middle and high school settings than they are in elementary settings. It would also be interesting to see a qualitative study be conducted with veteran teachers who may have noticed a change in the direction of performance goals over time.

With the goal of finding a relationship between self-handicapping and performance and ability goal classroom orientations, Urdan, Midgley, and Anderman, conducted a quantitative study of 528 fifth grade students from 18 diverse elementary schools in a Midwest, metropolitan

area (1998). Nearly equal numbers of participants were male and female, and received free or reduced lunch (Urdan et. al., 1998). Students were given a survey asking questions with a scale of one to five rating with one representing “not true” and five representing “very true” in regards to the topics of self-handicapping, motivation and behavior, perceived academic confidence, and perceived classroom goal structures (Urdan et. al., 1998). Previous to administering surveys, the students were told their answers would be kept confidential in order to avoid bias in their answers (Urdan et. al., 1998).

In addition, the fifth grade teachers were invited to participate in the study, with 31 teacher surveys involving use of task and ability goal-oriented practices to be compared to student and teacher perceptions of the use of self-handicapping strategies by individual students. Teachers were given a 79 question survey about their teaching practices and a 14 question survey about each student to measure the incidences of self-handicapping and behavior (Urdan et. al., 1998).

In order to analyze results while comparing and contrasting different classrooms involved in the study, a hierarchical linear model was used by Urdan, Midgley, and Anderman (1998). Boys indicated that they used self-handicapping strategies more often than girls ($\gamma = -.17$, $p < .05$), and that lower grades ($\gamma = -.23$, $p < .001$) and self confidence in academics (γ - -.22, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of the use of self-handicapping. Students with low academic self-confidence were more likely to employ self-handicapping strategies to prevent being seen by others as unintelligent and were also more likely to exhibit difficulties with behavior and motivation (Urdan et. al., 1998).

When student and teacher surveys were compared across classrooms using the full HLM model, classrooms where teachers indicated the emphasis of ability-oriented instructional

practices in their classroom had a higher incidence of students that use self-handicapping strategies. As identified in this study and previous research findings, when ability indicators are prominent in a classroom setting, there is more of an influence for students to feel they must look able. In turn, this can lead to self-presentation strategies in an attempt to inhibit a setback to self esteem. After using the HLM, the researchers discovered that the use of self-handicapping was more prominent in classrooms where students felt their teachers focused more on ability goals (Urdan et. al., 1998).

Although the young age of the students may have been a concern for reliability of the research, the study indicates that students as young as fifth graders are capable of and can recognize when they are using self-handicapping strategies (Urdan et. al., 1998). Using a sample of fifth grade students and teachers may have been a better sample compared to research conducted with college students, and it is interesting to see research from both the teachers' and students' perspectives. Considering the factor of students with learning disabilities and cognitive impairments perceptions may produce interesting results as well.

Using a reconstructive approach to teaching and reflecting upon the instructional practices used in the classroom is essential for teachers. Taking a look at goal structures and what teaching strategies encourage ability goals and task goal classroom environments can help teachers to see how their students might perceive teacher expectations. As mentioned in previous literature, more of an emphasis has been placed on performance and ability goals (Ciani, et. al., 2008). Urdan, Midgley, and Anderman's research creates a concern for an increase in the use of self-handicapping and self-presentation strategies as a result of the increase in performance goal oriented classrooms (1998).

Characteristics Related to Self-Deprecating Self-Presentation Strategies

In order for a student to be capable of using self-deprecating strategies in the classroom, they must have developed the personal ability to influence their impressions on others, have a concern for how their abilities are perceived by teachers and peers, and assume they will protect their self-esteem and reputation by using self-deprecating self-presentation strategies (Urdan, Midgley, & Anderman, 1998). Early adolescence is the stage where most students start to see the relationship between the amount of effort needed to complete a task and ability (Midgley, Arunkumar, & Urdan, 1996).

Midgley, Arunkumar, and Urdan conducted a quantitative survey administered to 112 eighth grade students with 47% of the students being male and 53% female in an urban area middle school (1996). All eighth grade students were invited to participate in an attempt to discover a relationship between self-handicapping and gender, self-esteem, and low achievement. A self-handicapping survey revised from previous research, the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale Ego-Oriented Scale, Learning-Oriented Goal Orientation Scale and abstract and concrete attitudes about schooling scales were given to the students after being told their answers would be kept confidential. Student's grades were also evaluated (Midgley, et. al., 1996).

When Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated, a positive relationship was discovered in the study between ego-oriented goals and the use of self-deprecating strategies and a poor attitude toward school (Midgely, et. al., 1996). Students who use self-deprecating strategies are more ego-oriented and less academically oriented in that they are more concerned with protecting their ego and self-worth, and less with being successful academically. Although previous studies have found boys are more likely to apply self-handicapping strategies, this hypothesis was not confirmed during the study (Midgely et. al., 1996). Self-handicapping was found to be most common in students with low achievement, but the relationship between self-

handicapping and self-esteem is unclear until further studies address academic self-esteem. Self-presentation strategies are often used to protect self-esteem, but it depends on where a student places their self worth; academics or ego (Midgely et. al., 1996).

In a classroom setting, there are many reasons for the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies. The most likely causes are feeling a need to avoid failure, create an excuse for failure, and lower teacher and peer expectations. Self-deprecating strategies are often used to avoid the stigma of being considered stupid and to maintain low expectations in order to avoid further failure (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Self-presentation strategies can be related to self-determination theory (Hodgins et. al., 1996). According to an introductory article completed by Deci and Ryan regarding their self-determination theory and motivation research, students of different self-determination orientations may be more likely to exhibit self-presentation strategies (2008). A student with high autonomy orientation is more likely to find value and sense of self through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and take credit for their actions. Controlled orientation involves extrinsic factors such as positive and negative reinforcement to encourage motivation, but a person of control orientation takes the motivations as a need to act or appear a certain way which has an internal effect. On the other hand, students of impersonal orientation, or amotivated, do not feel as though they have any control over outcomes and appear to lack neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

A study conducted by Lewis and Neighbors attempted to identify a relationship between self-determination, self-presentation, and motivation by replicating previous studies (2005). 141 female and 111 male undergraduate psychology students participated in the study by

volunteering and received extra course credit. Participants of the study were 89% Caucasian, 4% African American, and 7% of other descent (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

A packet of questionnaires were given to participants to complete individually or in a small group setting (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). The General Causality Orientations Scale measured self-determination by providing scenarios with autonomy, controlled, and impersonal responses to rate according to personal choices. The Self-Presentation Tactic Scale measured the use of twelve presentation strategies, an impression management scale, and the Sandbagging Scale were also administer. Lastly, the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale to measure if the participant is likely to give a desirable response when socially expected (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

With autonomy, controlled, and impersonal orientations seen as predictors, a multivariate multiple regression method was used to analyze the results (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Different orientations have an effect on the use of self-presentation strategies in a variety of ways. After analyzing the Self-Presentation Tactics Scale overall, persons with higher controlled and impersonal orientations were more likely to use self-presentation strategies, while persons with higher autonomy showed an inverse relationship. When interpreting a correlation matrix, interestingly one self-presentation characteristic that persons with greater autonomy did exhibit was apology (.29) when experiencing failure. The impression management scale produced similar results, with persons with controlled orientations being more likely to apply self-presentation strategies that portray a positive image (.41), but also exhibited the use of intimidation and aggression (.37). Persons with impersonal orientations were more likely to use supplication specifically (.48) focusing mostly on self-deprecating tendencies (Lewis and Neighbors, 2005).

Lewis and Neighbor's research is enlightening in the areas of autonomy, control, and impersonal orientations and their relationship to a multitude of self-presentation strategies. Understanding which self-presentation strategies are most closely related to specific orientations can be beneficial for teachers in identifying these personality traits in hopes of understanding what extrinsically and intrinsically motivates individual students to be successful (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

In an attempt to find a correlation between sandbagging, feeling performance pressure, and providing prior achievement, Gibson and Sachau conducted three quantitative studies (2000). A group of 61 psychology students were given extra course credit to encourage participation. A random sample of these participants was chosen to complete the study after completing the Sandbagging Scale, the Janis-Field Scale which measured self-esteem, and the Self-Handicapping Scale in the first study to test validity of the scale (Gibson and Sachau, 2000).

In the second part of the study, participants were asked to play a simple video game, and were then led to believe the study was being conducted to research physical intelligence and its relationship to social and career situations in hopes of further motivating participants to do their best (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). They were also split into two groups with one group being told, based on previous surveys, that they were expected to have an average score in the game. The other group was told that they were expected to do very well on the game and would be observed, which increased performance pressure. Next, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to help in measuring physical intelligence, which included a question regarding the participant predicting what their score would be, and were then allowed to play the game for a final score. When participants had completed the game, they also completed a questionnaire to

see what level of performance pressure, anxiety, expectations of the experimenter, and self-expectations they experienced (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

After completing a chi-square test and discovered an effect of pressure (χ^2 (1) = 39.31, *p* <.001), Gibson and Sachau considered their performance pressure manipulation to be successful (2000). Participants in the performance pressure situation indicated the experimenter had high expectations, and in the lower performance pressure situation, participants felt the experimenter had average expectations. The participants in the higher performance pressure situation that had high sandbagging scores, predicted lower task scores (M=5,094), and the opposite occurred with participants in the lower performance pressure group (M=9,366; M=10,110) and with participants with low sandbagging group (M=10,426) (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). These characteristics may be employed in order to lower onlookers' expectations and to reduce performance anxiety (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Gibson and Sachau's third study looked for a correlation between audiences receiving information on past performance and the presence of sandbagging (2000). Participants included introductory psychology students, 31 males and 38 females, who earned extra course credit for taking part in the study. Once again, participants were given the Sandbagging Scale, the Janis-Field Scale, and the Self-Handicapping Scale prior to being placed in a performance setting, and all participants were told they were going to be given a synonym test in order to measure verbal intelligence (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Participants were then placed with a partner with one taking the test and the other scoring, and were told they may be partnered together again in a later study to increase performance pressure and to encourage feelings of wanting to be considered competent (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Participants taking the test were given a practice test with less difficult

questions in hopes to build confidence, with the participants self-scoring the practice test. All of the test takers were given a prediction sheet to complete for their partner to evaluate when scoring the final test. Some prediction sheets had a line for their practice test score to be provided in order to place them in a prior information condition, and some did not (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

After assessing the prediction sheets, Gibson and Sachau found participants with high sandbagging scores also predicted low scores on the final synonym test, but only when not placed in the group where prior information was given regarding scores on the practice test (2000). Interestingly, sandbagging was not apparent when previous scores were recorded on prediction sheets (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Overall, Gibson and Sachau's work is helpful in identifying situations which may promote sandbagging. Knowing the performance situations and prior information situations that can lead to sandbagging may help educators to avoid providing opportunities for students to lower expectations. A difficulty with Gibson and Sachau's studies is the use of participants at a college age and the motivation of earning extra course credit. The mentality and maturity of students at an adolescent age may differ from adults placed in performance pressure situations, and an adolescent's ego may be impacted to a further extent than an adult. In addition, it is likely college students were more successful in elementary and secondary school.

Effects of Self- Deprecating Self-Presentations Strategies

Failure has a higher emotional impact on students with low self-esteem than their more academically confident counterparts (Park et. al., 2007). Students employ self-deprecating self-presentation strategies in an attempt to avoid failure, and resulting in a lack of self-determination for success (Martin, Marsh, & Debus, 2001). In addition to feelings of performance pressure and

fear of failure, self-esteem may be a predictor of sandbagging, self-handicapping, and supplication (Park et. al., 2007).

Park, Crocker, and Kiefer conducted two studies, with the goal of the first being to identify the relationship between trait self-esteem and state self-esteem when given positive, negative, or no feedback on an academic task (2007). A quantitative method was used with 122 participants between 18 and 23 years of age that were selected from a research pool at the University of Michigan (Park et. al., 2007).

In the first study, all participants were given the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale to measure their personal feelings of self-esteem, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure trait self-esteem before participating in an assessment (Park et. al., 2007). Some of the participants received the Remote Associates Test to measure verbal abilities related to academics and were given negative feedback on their results, due to the difficulty of the test. Others were asked to rate words in groups to identify which words they like best and did not receive feedback. Both groups were then given a state self-esteem scale to measure the person's feelings of self-esteem at that particular time, a mood scale to measure how they felt after receiving feedback, and a competence self-presentation goal scale to identify how they would want to appear to others (Park et. al., 2007).

Park, Crocker, and Kiefer used a multiple regression analysis with coding for failure and gender and dummy coding race (2007). They found that all participants who took the Remote Associates Test had lower state self-esteem after failure, but participants that initially began with high trait self-esteem were not as negatively impacted, and in some cases had an increase in self-esteem (Park et. al., 2007). In contrast, participants with low trait self-esteem that based their self-worth on academics were more negatively impacted by failure when state self-esteem and

mood were measured afterward. In addition, participants with high trait self-esteem were more likely to want to appear competent to others after experiencing failure, while the opposite occurred with participants with low self-esteem. Gender did not appear to have an effect on interpretations of findings, but participants of Asian descent experienced an increase positive affect after experiencing failure. The researchers hypothesize that this is due to persons of Asian descent possibly looking at failure as an opportunity for self-improvement (Park et. al., 2007).

Park, Crocker, and Kiefer conducted a second study due to a generated confound when the control group from the first study was not told that the RAT was measuring verbal abilities, and to replicate and extend the previous study (2007). The RAT was used yet again in the second study with 109 participants from the University at Buffalo subject pool with ages ranging from 18 to 36 years and with a majority of participants being of White or Asian descent. A difference in the second study is all participants were given the RAT, but one half received a more difficult version and the other a less difficult version with the groups being chosen randomly. All participants completed the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as a measure of self-evaluation and associating the self with failure and success, and the Competence Self-Presentation Goal survey (Park et. al., 2007).

Findings indicated that participants placed in the failure feedback situation with low self-esteem minimized how they felt about appearing competent to others academically, while participants with high self-esteem did not (Park et. al., 2007). The researchers feel this may be part of a self-presentation strategy to appear as though being seen incompetent by others is not important to them. After analyzing the IAT component, when placed in the success situation, participants with low self-esteem were more likely to feel responsible for their success and had an ego-boost. The opposite occurred in the failure situation with participants with low trait self-

esteem feeling less competent and even worse about their self-image. All participants in the success situation and persons in the high self-esteem category did not exhibit a significant relationship between academic self-worth and appearing competent to others. High self-esteem did not have a significant negative or positive effect on self-perceptions after experiencing success or failure (Park et. al., 2007).

Park, Crocker, and Kiefer's research can be beneficial for teachers to understand students may carry issues and past feelings with them into their classrooms (2007). Once again, a study with younger participants may be helpful in further identifying these characteristics, and it would be interesting to see perceptions of students with learning disabilities and cognitive impairments. The research does help to identify the personality traits that can be related to self-deprecating self-presentation strategies. Understanding the process of the cycle of failure leading to low state self-esteem, low trait self-esteem, and possibly self-presentation can be beneficial to teachers to identify and hopefully prevent the continuation of the cycle (Park et. al., 2007).

To further understand the effects and characteristics of self-handicapping, Zuckerman, Kieffer, and Knee conducted two quantitative studies (1998). The first study contained 181 female and 81 male undergraduate students completing questionnaires to research the academic and adjustment effects of self-handicapping (1998). The studies were longitudinal in that questionnaires were completed at the beginning of the semester, and again two months later at the end of the semester. A self-handicapping scale (SHS) and the COPE, a coping scale with the addition of two subscales, were administered during both questionnaire sessions, with student GPA and SAT scores taken into consideration to make an academic comparison (Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

Zuckerman, Kieffer, and Knee's findings indicate that students who admitted to high incidences of self-handicapping strategies have a more difficult time applying positive coping skills and are less successful academically. A high level of self-handicapping was most significantly related to an increase in behavioral and mental disengagement, and denial, with a less significant increase in personal reflection, and a very slight significant increase in self-blame (Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

A year after completing the first study and feeling a need to further study the effects of self handicapping, Zuckerman, Kieffer, and Knee conducted a second quantitative study with a sample of undergraduate students gaining course credit including 142 women and 110 men (1998). The same measures from the first study were employed in the second with the omission of some of the questions in the surveys due to the first studies findings, and with the addition of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) to measure differences in personal feelings, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and were administered at the beginning of the semester and again two months later toward the end of the semester (Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

Without self-esteem taken into consideration, the findings for the second study were concurrent with the first (Zuckerman et. al., 1998). With the inclusion of self-esteem, the effects of self-handicapping were similarly significant; with self-blame no longer exhibiting a significant increase. The researchers admit that the insignificance of self-blame may be due to chance since self-esteem was not entered into the equation in the first study and the significance was very slight(Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

Two regression analyses were completed to identify a relationship between self-handicapping, self-esteem, and affect over time. Participants that admitted to a employing a high

amount of self-handicapping at the beginning of the semester also exhibited lower self-esteem toward the end of the semester (Zuckerman et. al., 1998). Similarly, students who exhibited low self-esteem at the beginning of the semester, admitted to an increased incidence of self-handicapping at the end of the two month duration. In addition, participants that exhibited more negative affect and less positive affect indicated an increase in self-handicapping strategies toward the end of the semester (Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

Although Zuckerman, Kieffer, and Knee's studies were longitudinal unlike previous research referenced, the studies were very objective considering the methods consisted of only completing surveys. An additional factor considered in the second study was the number of times a student attended an appointment at the university health center with the idea that self-handicappers may visit the health center more frequently to use sickness as an excuse for failure. An increased occurrence was found in the fall semester, but not the spring, so it would be interesting to see attendance taken into consideration since not all students visit a doctor when claiming to be ill. Since students with low self-esteem do not want to appear incompetent to others, they use self-deprecating self-presentation strategies and possibly leading to instances of failure (Zuckerman et. al., 1998).

Motivations and Discouraging Self-Deprecating Self-Presentation Strategies

As students transition into the middle and high school grades, teachers tend to focus more on performance goals and less on mastery goals (Meece, 2003). Ames and Archer's quantitative study conducted in a school for the academically advanced looked for a connection between mastery and performance goals and their effects on student motivation (1988). Participants included 91 male and 85 female junior high and high school students selected randomly from

classes of various subjects and answered survey questions regarding that particular class (Ames & Archer, 1988).

Survey questions regarding classroom goal structures used a Likert scale with questions describing qualities of teacher strategies that focus on mastery and performance goal characteristics (Ames & Archer, 1988). A portion of the Learning and Study Strategy Inventory was given to assess student use of self-regulation strategies. Questions were also created to assess students' feelings regarding challenge, the class, causal attribution, and personal feelings toward ability in the specific class (Ames & Archer, 1988).

A correlation analyses produced results with a significant difference in students' perceptions of classes with mastery or performance goal orientations (Ames & Archer, 1988). Students who considered their classroom environment to be mastery goals based, were more likely to seek challenge, use more learning strategies, and enjoyed their class. In addition, a regression analysis taking into consideration perceived ability produced the same results. Students also gave credit to their teachers when they were successful, but did not blame the teacher when experiencing failure (Ames & Archer, 1988).

In contrast, students in classrooms believed to have a performance goal orientation did not exhibit a significant effect on learning strategies used and task choices, but students did slightly feel lower perceptions of ability and were more likely to blame failure on lack of ability and work that is too difficult (Ames & Archer, 1988). To further explore the effects of different classroom goal structures, Ames and Archer added the quality of having both mastery and performance goals present in the classroom into the equation (1988). When a classroom that has a moderate to high incidence of mastery goals, whether or not performance goals are included,

they continued to show an increase in the use of learning strategies, take challenges, see effort as the precursor for success, and generally enjoy being in their class (Ames & Archer, 1988).

In addition to the school for the academically advanced, it would be interesting to see the same study replicated in a middle class public school to see if a different demographic would produce the same results. Overall, Ames and Archer's work gives an idea of how students' perceptions of classroom goal environments might affect motivation and student feelings of ability and has encouraged further research on the topic of goal orientation (1988). Students tend to use self-deprecating self-presentation strategies when they have feelings of low ability and do not want to damage their ego by exhibiting this low ability (Gibson & Sachau, 2000; Midgley, et. al., 1996). Emphasis on mastery goals may help to promote student feelings of success as compared to themselves and encourage students to challenge themselves to learn more (Ames & Archer, 1988).

The emphasis on performance goals has increased with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (Ciani et. al., 2008). A significant focus on performance goals has been identified as a predictor for the use of self-presentation strategies, in conjunction with controlled and impersonal orientation personalities (Urdan et. al., 1998) Deemphasizing performance goals and incorporating more of a mastery goal structure may be a step in the right direction in preventing the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies (Ciani et. al.; Ames & Archer, 1988).

Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem

Self-deprecating self-presentation strategies are having an overall negative impact on student achievement. Analyzing literature regarding possible causes, characteristics, and the effects of these strategies may promote teacher awareness and what may be done to prevent self-deprecating self-presentation from occurring.

Causes and Possible Effects of Performance Goal Orientation

One possible underlying cause of self-presentation strategies are that student goals are taking a more performance and ego orientation (Ciani et. al., 2008; Midgley et. al., 1996). A nationwide increase in teachers feeling compelled to raise test scores, has led to performance oriented goal structures that promote the use of assessment based instructional strategies and less on a multitude of instructional strategies. With the increasing standards expected of administrators, teachers, and students comes an overwhelming need for students to compare themselves to others in the hopes to appear competent (Ciani et. al., 2008).

With an increase in performance goals orientations may come an increase in self-handicapping. Students and teachers that report high incidences of performance and ability goal orientations also indicated higher incidences of self-handicapping (Urdan et. al., 1998). An increase in self-handicapping may be related to the feeling of competence and appearing competent to others being a quality of a performance goal oriented classroom (Corpus et. al., 2009; Urdan et. al., 1998). Since students who use self-presentation strategies employ them in an attempt to avoid showing inadequacies or inabilities to peers and teachers, they may be more likely to employ them in a performance goal focused classroom (Gibson & Sachau, 2000; Urdan et. al., 1998).

Characteristics Related to Self-Deprecating Self-Presentation Strategies

Students with different orientations such as autonomy, controlled, and impersonal orientations may lead to the use of self-presentation strategies. If a student has higher autonomy, they are more likely to take responsibility for their own actions, progress, and success (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). They are more intrinsically motivated and are willing to challenge themselves (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005; Hodgins et. al., 1996). A student with high autonomy orientation is the least likely to exhibit self-deprecating behaviors; with the only self-presentation strategy closely related to higher autonomy was apology after failure, which may be due to the tendency to feel responsible (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

Use of self-presentation strategies that encourage positive image to others, such as self-promotion and enhancement, may indicate a student with a controlled orientation (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Students with controlled orientations are extrinsically motivated by rewards and punishments and have a need to appear competent and capable to others (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005; Hodgins et. al., 1996). Since students who sandbag present lower abilities to increase a chance of experiencing success and appearing competent, it could be possible that a person with a controlled orientation is more likely to be capable of sandbagging (Gibson & Sachau, 2000; Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

Appearing helpless and using self-presentation strategies such as supplying excuses and sandbagging to continue to lower intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, is a sign of an impersonal orientation (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Since persons with an impersonal orientation feel that they do not have an effect on outcomes, they attempt to place responsibility on others by using supplication to obtain sympathy and help from others (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005; Hodgins et. al., 1996). Students that are of an impersonal orientation may be the most difficult students to

motivate since they do not feel a personal attachment to effort leading to success (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005).

Poor achievement may be an indicator of the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies. Rather than take a chance of appearing stupid to teachers and peers, a student may choose to employ a self-handicapping strategy with the intention of placing blame on the self-handicapping choices, and not the student's own abilities. Poor achievement may be an indicator of the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies since students who self-handicap tend to place greater value on their ego and self-worth and less on academics (Midgely, et. al., 1996). Not only do students with low self-esteem not want to appear incompetent to others, they attempt to make peers believe that appearing competent to others is not important to them (Park et. al., 2007). Although a student may spare their image when self-handicapping, inevitably there will be a negative effect on their academic performance (Zuckerman et. al., 1998; Midgely et. al., 1996). Some studies have also found that boys are more likely than girls to use self-deprecating self-presentation strategies, but this was not consistent among studies.

Effects of Self-Deprecating Self-Presentation Strategies

Self-esteem, whether high or low, has an impact on student self-worth and motivation to do well academically (Park et. al., 2007). Consistent use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies can have detrimental effects on self-esteem (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). The ability to apply coping strategies, and academic success are negatively impacted by self-handicapping strategies. Students who self-handicap struggle with self-reflection which can lead to having an unrealistic view of abilities and students may not realize they are capable of doing more (Zuckerman et. al., 1998). Students who use supplication may significantly decrease the amount

of new information learned since someone else is usually doing the work for them (Lewis & Nieghbors, 1996)

Students with low trait self-esteem may have more of a difficult time recovering after experiencing failure and expect to fail instead of improving in spite of failure (Park et. al., 2007). It appears as though having low trait self-esteem leads to students having a low state self-esteem before, during, and after a task (Park et. al., 2007; Gibson & Sachau, 2000). This trend can lead to using self-presentation strategies before a task in hopes of minimizing the hit to self-esteem (Park et. al., 2007).

As research has shown, trait self-esteem can have a positive or negative effect on state-self-esteem (Park et. al., 2007). When a student with low trait self-esteem is in a situation of performance pressure and feelings of failure, they have less of an expectation to be successful in similar situations in the future (Park et. al., 2007; Zuckerman et. al., 1998). A student with low trait self esteem may choose to employ a self-presentation strategy such as sandbagging or self-handicapping to put less of the pressure on their ability and more on their personal choices (Park et. al., 2007; Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Although a student's personal self-esteem as perceived by others may increase with the use of self-presentation strategies, academic self-esteem may be low and lead to further feeling the need to use self-presentation strategies (Midgely et. al., 1996).

Gibson and Sachau's findings may apply to an educational setting when a student is feeling performance pressure in a classroom setting (2000). If a student frequently sandbags, it could lead the teacher to believe the student has lower abilities which leads to lower teacher and student expectations. When expectations are lower, anxiety to perform well and compare to others in the classroom is lowered, and achievement does not improve (Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Motivations and Discouraging Self-Deprecating Self-Presentation Strategies

Fostering high self-esteem in students may help reduce the chances of a student falling into the vicious cycle of expecting failure and lowering expectations by using self-deprecating strategies (Park et. al., 2007). Self-perception of ability has an effect on self-esteem and feeling capable to learn more (Ames & Archer, 1988). Focusing on individual mastery goals based on a student's individual abilities may provide opportunities for success, leading to a boost in self-esteem, and hopefully leading to a motivation to want to experience more success and learning (Ames & Archer, 1988; Urdan et. al., 1998).

Having a strong indicator of a student's actual abilities early on, may prevent sandbagging since they are more likely to sandbag when they feel confident that they are able to convince their audience they are less capable. Since their ability has already been revealed, there is a significantly less chance of the student convincing their audience of a lower ability (Gibson & Sachau, 2000). Progress monitoring by the student as well as the teacher could also help foster feelings of success, and personal responsibility in hopes of preventing sandbagging and supplication (Ames & Archer, 1988; Gibson & Sachau, 2000).

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Recommendation

Although high-stakes testing has increased over time, the well-rounded education of a child and the mastery of important concepts is the most important thing for a teacher to focus on (Ciani et. al., 2008). Performance goals should not be eliminated completely since they may motivate some students to learn and like a sense of competition, but a further decrease in mastery goals should not continue (Ciani et. al., 2008; Ames & Archer, 1988). A combination of performance goals and mastery goals may be an effective approach at creating an effective classroom goal structure (Ciani et. al., 2008; Ames & Archer, 1988).

An emphasis on mastery goals would focus more on the individual student and their progress to help build and foster self-esteem in ones' own abilities, and less on feelings of inadequacy as compared to others (Ciani et. al., 2008; Ames & Archer, 1988). In turn, this may help to decrease the instance of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies used to take the focus away from student abilities (Midgely et. al., 1996).

According to Meece, there are many qualities of a mastery goal oriented classroom with a variety of instructional strategies being employed (2003). Most performance goal oriented classrooms mainly use lecture, worksheets, and multiple choice tests as teaching tools and assessments (Ciani et. al., 2008). Mastery goal oriented classrooms use a variety of projects, activities, and cooperative learning opportunities in conjunction with traditional practices to teach and assess concept mastery (Meece, 2003).

As mentioned previously, students seek to master new skills and make improvements as compared to their own previous achievements in a mastery goal oriented classroom (Kaufman &

Dodge, 2009). Challenging students to learn more and make improvements as compared to oneself is important in a mastery goal oriented classroom (Meece, 2003). Self-monitoring and teacher monitoring is crucial in order to identify areas where improvements need to be made, and to track progress (Meece, 2003). Thoughtful feedback, whether positive or negative, should be seen as an opportunity for improvement, and the classroom environment should be respectful of challenges peers may face (Meece, 2003). Identifying improvements and feeling successful can lead to students seeking further challenge and influence motivation (Meece, 2003).

Areas for Further Research

Further research could be conducted in the area of raising self-expectations and motivation. A majority of the research reviewed has involved quantitative means, some of which identified classrooms with mastery goal orientations, but only touch the surface. A study involving a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods may produce interesting results. Although mastery goal orientation has been linked to student motivation, it may be beneficial to delve deeper into the strategies used by teachers that foster student motivation, have a main focus on mastery goals, and lead to earning satisfactory scores on standardized tests. In addition, a majority of the studies reviewed include college age participants with some earning extra course credit, so it may be helpful to focus on a sample of teachers and adolescent students.

Participants in the study should include a variety of teachers with varying experience preferably in K-12 schools in middle class areas, and their students. To begin narrowing the sample, a variety of surveys could be conducted with students and teachers to identify teachers that focus on mastery goals similar to Urdan, Midgley, and Anderman's research (1998). This information can then be aligned with standardized testing data to find a purposive sample of

teachers that exhibit a mastery goal classroom orientation, and have had successful scores on standardized tests (Patten, 2007).

Qualitative methods involving semi-structured interviews of the purposive sample could take place to further identify the effective teaching strategies the sample uses (Patten, 2007). Research has identified some qualities of mastery-goal oriented classrooms, but specific strategies and tools employed in the classroom could be more beneficial in helping teachers apply mastery goal emphasized materials. A CQR method could be used to help organize, evaluate, and find patterns in the data collected by interviewers to assist in presenting the research for teacher use (Patten, 2007).

Conclusion

The increased pressure on schools to show competency on standardized tests has hand an impact on the goal structures of classrooms over time (Ciani et. al., 2008). Since standardized tests focus on performance and comparing to others, classrooms are moving toward an increase in performance goal structures (Ciani et. al., 2008). When placed in situations of performance pressure and being compared to others, the chance of a student using a self-deprecating self-presentation strategy such as sandbagging, self-handicapping, and supplication increases (Urdan et. al., 1998).

Identifying and preventing the use of self-deprecating self-presentation strategies can be difficult. Finding the underlying issues such as self-esteem and personal orientation may be a step in the right direction (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005; Zuckerman et. al., 1998). Making a connection between different self-presentation strategies and personal orientations can further help teachers identify underlying causes (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Understanding qualities and effects of classroom goal orientation and students who use self-deprecating self-presentation

strategies is crucial in preventing the vicious cycle of failure and promoting the ultimate goal of student success.

REFERENCES

Ames, C., & Archer, J. (1988). Achievement goals in the classroom: Students' learning strategies and motivation processes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*(3), 260-267 doi:10.1037/0022-0663.80.3.260

Brandt, A. C., Vonk, R., & Knippenberg, A. (2009). The source effect: Person descriptions by self versus others have differential effects on impression formation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(7) 965-977doi: 10.1177/0146167209335056

Christopher, A.N. Morgan, R.D., Marek, P., Keller, M., Drummond, K. (2005). Materialism and self-presentational styles. *Personality and Individual Differences, 38* 137–149 doi:10.1016/j.paid.2004.03.015

Ciani, K.D., Summers, J.J., Easter, M.A. (2008). A ‘‘top-down’’ analysis of high school teacher motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 33*, 533–560 doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2007.04.002

Deci, E.L., Ryan, R.M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology 49*(3), 182–185 doi: 10.1037/a0012801

Corpus, J.H., McClintic-Gilbert, M.S., Hayenga, A.O. (2009) Within-year changes in children’s intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations: Contextual predictors and academic outcomes Contemporary Educational Psychology 34 (2009) 154–166 doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2009.01.001

Gibson, B., & Sachau, D. (2000). Sandbagging as a self-presentational strategy: Claiming to be less than you are. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*(1), 56-70 doi:10.1177/0146167200261006

Harackiewicz, J.M., Barron, K.E., Pintrich, P.R., Elliot, A.J., & Thrash, T.M. (2002). Revision of Achievement Goal Theory: Necessary and Illuminating. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(3), 638–645. doi: 10.1037//0022-0663.94.3.638Hodgins, H.S.,

Liebeskind, E., & Schwartz, W. (1996).Getting out of hot water: Facework in social predicaments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 71*(2) 300-314. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.300

Kaufman, A. & Dodge, T. (2009). Student perceptions and motivation in the classroom: Exploring relatedness and value. Social Psychology Education,12,101–112 doi: 10.1007/s11218-008-9070-2

Knee, C.R., Zuckerman, M. (1998). A nondefensive personality: Autonomy and control as moderators of defensive coping and self-handicapping. *Journal of Research in Personality 32*, 115–130. doi:10.1006/jrpe.1997.2207

Lewis, M.A., Neighbors, C. (2005). Self-determination and the use of self-presentation strategies. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 145*(4), 469-89 doi:10.3200/SOCP.145.4.469-490

Martin, A.J., Marsh, H.W., Debus, R.L. (2001). A quadripolar need achievement representation of self-handicapping and defensive pessimism. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 583-610. doi:10.3102/00028312038003583

Martin, A.J., Marsh, H.W., Williamson, A., & Debus, R.L. (2003). Self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation: A qualitative study of university students. *Journal of Educational Psychology,95*(3), 617–628 doi: DOI: 10.1037/0022-0663.95.3.617

Meece, J.L. (2003). Applying learner-centered principles to middle school education. *Theory into Practice*, *42*(2) 109-116 doi. 10.1002/pits.20290

Midgley, C., Arunkumar, R., Urdan, T.C. (1996). “If I don't do well tomorrow, there's a reason": Predictors of adolescents' use of academic self-handicapping strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*(3) 423-434 doi:10.1037/0022-0663.88.3.423

Park, L.E., Crocker, J., & Kiefer, A.K. (2007). Contingencies of self-worth, academic failure, and goal pursuit. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33*(11*)*; 1503-1517 doi: 10.1177/0146167207305538

Patten, M. L. (2005). *Understanding Research Methods: An Overview of the Essentials (6th ed.)*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Pub

Urdan, T., Midgley, C., & Anderman, K. (1998). The role of classroom goal structure in students’ use of self-handicapping strategies. *American Education Resource Journal, 35*(1) 101-122. doi: 10.3102/00028312035001101

Urdan, T., & Midgley, C. (2001). Academic self-handicapping: What we know, what more there is to learn. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*(2), 115-138 doi:10.1037/0022-0663.96.2.251

Zuckerman, M., Kieffer, S.C., & Knee, C.R. (1998). Consequences of self-handicapping: Effects on coping, academic performance, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(6) 1619-1628 doi:10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1619