8-2-2014

ConnectMore: A Relationship-building Curriculum for First-year College Students

Hayley Goldenthal

University of Pennsylvania, hayleyjane127@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone

Part of the Clinical Psychology Commons, Other Psychology Commons, Personality and Social Contexts Commons, and the Social Psychology Commons


http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/71

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/71

For more information, please contact libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu.
ConnectMore: A Relationship-building Curriculum for First-year College Students

Abstract
With ever-increasing depression rates, particularly in the young adult population who are the most at-risk age group for developing depression (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009), there is a great need for innovative approaches to prevention and treatment. Confronted with the challenge to implement programs that will work to combat this epidemic, universities can apply the insights and interventions offered by the field of positive psychology. From the lens of positive psychology, positive relationships are some of the greatest sources for cultivating well-being and are therefore of great interest. This paper proposes and outlines a college course, ConnectMore, based on interventions and principles of positive psychology. The course will present the evidence-based interventions borne out of the field of positive psychology. The overarching objective is to increase the quality of the participants’ relationships and thus, their overall life satisfaction while simultaneously lowering overall rates of depression.

Keywords
relationships, connections, resilience, positive psychology, college students, depression, well-being, communication

Disciplines
Clinical Psychology | Other Psychology | Personality and Social Contexts | Social Psychology

This other is available at ScholarlyCommons: http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/71
ConnectMore:
A Relationship-building Curriculum for First-year College Students

Hayley Goldenthal
University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Dr. Judith Saltzberg Levick
August 1, 2014
Abstract

With ever-increasing depression rates, particularly in the young adult population who are the most at-risk age group for developing depression (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009), there is a great need for innovative approaches to prevention and treatment. Confronted with the challenge to implement programs that will work to combat this epidemic, universities can apply the insights and interventions offered by the field of positive psychology. From the lens of positive psychology, positive relationships are some of the greatest sources for cultivating well-being and are therefore of great interest. This paper proposes and outlines a college course, ConnectMore, based on interventions and principles of positive psychology. The course will present the evidence-based interventions borne out of the field of positive psychology. The overarching objective is to increase the quality of the participants’ relationships and thus, their overall life satisfaction while simultaneously lowering overall rates of depression.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PART I- Background and Rationale for Curriculum** ............................................................... 4

- Current state/research of clinical depression ........................................................................ 4
- Depression in college students ............................................................................................ 5
- Positive psychology ............................................................................................................. 8
- Previous applications of positive psychology to this population ........................................ 9
- Benefits of positive relationships ....................................................................................... 9
- Successful positive interventions ....................................................................................... 16
- Format of the curriculum .................................................................................................. 18

**PART II - Outline of Curriculum** ..................................................................................... 20

- Character strengths .......................................................................................................... 20
- High quality connections ................................................................................................. 25
- Appreciative inquiry ......................................................................................................... 32
- Capitalization and active-constructive responding .......................................................... 35
- Limitations ....................................................................................................................... 41
- Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 42

**REFERENCES** .................................................................................................................. 44

**APPENDICES** .................................................................................................................. 54

- Appendix A ..................................................................................................................... 54
- Appendix B ..................................................................................................................... 56
- Appendix C ..................................................................................................................... 57
- Appendix D ..................................................................................................................... 58
- Appendix E ..................................................................................................................... 60
- Appendix F ..................................................................................................................... 62

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ................................................................................................. 63
PART I – Background and Rationale for Curriculum

Current state/research of clinical depression

Clinical depression is often considered by many professionals to be the “common cold” of outpatient populations (Kanter, Busch, Weeks, & Landes, 2008). Ubiquitous, yet often quite serious in its impact, depression is still on the rise with up to 25 million people in the United States alone meeting criteria for some type of depressive disorder in a given year (Keller, 1994). Beyond the individual suffering, depressive disorders also culminate in sizeable economic expenditure including time spent away from the workplace and an upshot in health care costs. Comprehensive measures that include incidences of work absenteeism, treatment costs, and other factors, estimate the annual financial cost of diagnosing and treating depressive disorders in the United States to be over forty billion dollars (Antonouccio, Thomas, & Danton, 1997 as cited in Kanter, Busch, Weeks, & Landes, 2008). Suicide is the ultimate price to pay.

Presently, cognitive therapy (Hoffmann, Asmundson, & Beck, 2013) has become one of the forefront psychotherapeutic approaches to the treatment of depression. A large amount of research exists concerning the efficacy of cognitive (or cognitive-behavioral) interventions for depression (Hollon, Shelton, & Loosen, 1991). However, cognitive therapy is not effective for every problem or every population. Weissman, Klerman, Prusoff, Sholomskas, & Padian (1981) mention the need to evaluate the effects of alternative approaches such as behavioral marital therapy or other methods with an interpersonal focus in those patients who have failed to experience sustained improvement after partaking in cognitive therapy or pharmacotherapy. These patients may respond to other types of interventions, which is a possibility that needs to be investigated further.
With all of the space for improvement not only in terms of depression treatment but also prevention, it is truly valuable to investigate all possible innovative and cutting-edge theoretically and empirically supported preventative techniques. Researchers such as Kanter et al. (2008) believe that part of the issue in discovering effective treatments is that there are many pathways to depression since the term “depression” is not a precise, technical term and does not have a fundamental, consistent, established composition. Instead, the term refers to a chronic experience of feeling sad or down and to the associated symptoms, which vary considerably among individuals and circumstances. This heterogeneity of depression symptoms is due to the variation in historical and environmental controlling variables (e.g. age of onset, family history, gender, stress) (Kanter et al., 2008). With that said, some processes may be more common than others in the etiology of depression, for example, unfulfilling social support and social relations (Hayes & Follette, 1992).

A lack of social support has long been proposed as “both a risk factor for and a consequence of depression” (Brown & Harris, 1978 as cited in Panzarella, Alloy, & Whitehouse, 2006, p.308). There is a robust and inverse relationship between social support and depression in a wide range of populations that include college, community and clinical samples (Panzarella, Alloy, & Whitehouse, 2006), pointing to the idea that levels of social support and depression influence one another reciprocally. Building and enhancing social support is therefore an important area of research to pursue when developing preventative interventions.

**Depression in college students**

Young adults are the most at-risk age group for developing clinical levels of depression (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). Over the span of a year, 18-29 year olds are 200% more likely to have experienced depression than those ages 60+ (Kessler et al., 2003). In today’s day
and age, after having graduated high school, college or graduate school, mobility seems to be the rule for many young adults, rather than the exception, with over two-thirds of U.S. undergraduates living away at school (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2008). After graduating high school, many young adults find themselves far away from where they grew up, separated from their friends, their families and everything they had known, required to adjust to entirely new environments (Furr, Westefeld, McConnell, & Jenkins, 2001). This adjustment can be particularly difficult without the proper resources available by way of social relationships.

In a 1987 study that was conducted to examine the issues related to college student suicide (Westefeld & Furr, 1987), 81% of the 962 randomly-sampled college student respondents from three different institutions experienced what they identified as depression while in college, with grade problems, relationship problems, loneliness and money problems cited most frequently as the contributing factors. Furr et al. (2001) held their own study a decade later examining the responses of 1,455 college students from four different colleges and universities, including a major research university located in the Midwest with 28,000 students (Institution A); a southeastern state university with 16,700 students that has a majority of commuter students (Institution B); a southeastern community college with an enrollment of 4,000 students (Institution C); and a small, private liberal arts college with 1,800 students (Institution D) in the southeast. In their study, overall they found comparable, strong results with 53% of participants indicating they, too, had experienced what they would label as depression while attending college, with the same contributing factors cited (grade problems, relationship problems, loneliness and money problems) (Furr et al., 2001).
Interestingly, students at the two larger institutions were more likely to have experienced depression since coming to college, and students from the community college were less likely to cite loneliness as a factor in depression (Furr et al., 2001). Indeed, the students attending the larger institution reported more feelings of isolation, with those at the community colleges more likely to have a support network since most of these students already lived in the local community and the vast majority did not need to relocate to attend college (Furr et al., 2001). As follows, being a part of the community of one’s institution may be a mitigating factor against depression (Furr et al., 2001).

Particularly at the campuses of larger institutions, loneliness is a major issue. Furr et al. (2001) explain that counseling centers need to work with other student offices in order to create and implement innovative opportunities for students to become more engaged with the entire community and each other. In order to do so, faculty in those departments, or in this case, the resident advisors of the college, may need more guidance in making referrals or in developing workshops to strengthen students’ abilities to cope with the demands of school and life in general. Instead of working in a reactive or corrective mode, counseling centers need to be providing proper guidance and resources in the development of prevention programs that can take a variety of formats (Furr et al., 2001).

A study by Seligman, Rashid & Parks (2006) found evidence that treatments for depression may valuably be complemented by positive psychology exercises that are intended to increase positive emotion, relationships, meaning and engagement. Additionally, from a preventative angle, by identifying and honing one’s relationship skills early on, individuals could not only improve subjective assessments of mental health and life satisfaction, but also safeguard against depression.
Positive psychology

The goal of positive psychology is to develop a more comprehensive and balanced scientific understanding of life – the ups and downs and everything in between (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Mainstream psychology has long since taken a mitigative approach, with a focus on helping us get less of what we do not want in our lives. Conversely, positive psychology takes a more constructive approach, focusing on helping individuals get more of what they want (Pawelski, Lecture, 6 October 2013). A complete science/practice of psychology includes “an understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their interaction, and validated interventions that relieve suffering and increase happiness—two separable endeavors” (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p.2). It is important to remember that positive psychologists do not claim to have conceived of the “good life” or to have found the “cure for happiness”, but rather, their objective is to connect the research behind ideas and practices about what makes life most worth living (Peterson & Park, 2003).

A core tenet of the field of positive psychology is that the psychology of positive human functioning will produce scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving in individuals, families and communities (Peterson, 2006). To do so, one must focus on the domains of positive psychology, which include positive experiences, traits, relationships and institutions. Part of the positive psychology initiative is for psychologists to take theories and techniques learned about the science and practice of treating mental illness and use them to create a practice of increasing human flourishing (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). In particular, positive relationships are of great interest as close, personal relationships are the primary source for cultivating well-being and the essential foundation for Martin Seligman’s (Seligman, 2011) PERMA theory of flourishing, which posits that individual flourishing is
comprised of five independent components: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

**Previous applications of positive psychology to this population**

Researchers and mental health professionals have responded to this need for preventative measures against depression by developing and testing prevention programs albeit in middle-school aged children (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). Existing applications of positive psychology programs in school settings have focused primarily on building resilience (e.g. Penn Resiliency Program) or building strengths and well-being (e.g. Geelong Grammar School); yet there is a dearth of programs that have interpersonal emphasis.

Furthermore, the application of positive psychology to the college student population limits itself to more structured, elected college psychology courses (e.g. Introduction to Positive Psychology). Incidentally, one of the most popular courses at Harvard University in 2006 was Tal Ben-Shahar’s positive psychology course that taught students “how to be happy” (Pennock, 2013). Other schools across the United States (as well as overseas) among them the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell University have all followed suit, offering enormously popular positive psychology courses. Since the field is a subject of such great interest for college-aged students, it seems very likely that a curriculum centering around teaching and practicing empirically-tested interventions might be met with the same warm reception.

**Benefits of positive relationships**

In the DSM-IV-TR, one of the symptoms of clinical depression is feelings of worthlessness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As demonstrated above, prevailing
theories of major depressive disorder point to a lack of social support and meaning in one’s life among the risk factors for clinical depression, but these are typically viewed as consequences or mere correlates of depression (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). Seligman et al., (2006) suggest that these may be causal of depression and therefore, surmise that building positive relationships will help to alleviate and prevent depression, which is exactly where positive psychology principles come into play.

Good relationships are critical to our well-being – they make us happier and function better (Diener & Biswas-Diner, 2008). In fact, good social relationships have been found to be the best predictor of life satisfaction (Diener & Biswas Diener, 2008). They were found to consistently correlate with higher subjective well-being across every country examined (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003), rendering them possibly the most important source of an individual’s well-being (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Within the context of schools, Diener & Seligman (2002) found stronger positive correlations between happiness and good relationships than between happiness and intelligence, school grades and social status.

Positive relationships don’t only serve as protective factors against depression, they are also bastions for cultivating some of the greatest amounts of happiness in life (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). By creating a college curriculum that uses research-based positive psychology practices and interventions, I propose the creation of a program that will offer young adults the opportunity to learn and refine relationship skills, making new connections with peers in similar situations, thereby increasing their well-being in the process.

Apart from safeguarding against depression, the benefits of maintaining and honing positive relationships on one’s positive affect are immeasurable. According to Barbara Fredrickson (2009), the most warmhearted positive emotions are felt with others, with these
emotions triggering us to feel even more close and connected to the important people in our lives. Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory denotes that positive emotions trigger upward spirals that allow individuals to broaden their awareness. The theory further explains that feeling positive emotions and thus, this upward spiral, encourages future exploration and the building of resilience and resources to better cope with adversity (including events which may trigger a depressed mood) in a more open-minded way, facilitating the individual to express more positive affect and to become more productive (Fredrickson, 2001).

Likewise, the positive emotion of “joy” is all about reconnection with a power greater than us, and exists only in connection with others (Vaillant, 2008). Instead of simply just serving as instantaneous resources to improve our well-being, these positive emotions play a much more expansive role as they work to broaden and build our resources by widening our tolerance, expanding our moral compass and sharpening our creativity (Vaillant, 2008 & Fredrickson, 2009).

Through their participation in the program, members will also be exposed to individuals who come from backgrounds different than their own. All will have the chance to interact with peers with whom they never would have before. A greater diversity of background and experience in a college setting enables young adults with tools for better moral reasoning and understanding of one another (Haidt, 2012). Friends can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves because they challenge us, give us reasons that sometimes trigger new intuitions, which make it possible to change our judgments, and relate better to one another (Haidt, 2012). Through a shared moral matrix, or unified world views that align morally, and exposure to new, different perspectives, participants will therefore be able to advance their skills at forming strong relationships that can provide support in times of adversity.
Strengths-based positive interventions will also be incorporated as part of the program, as
evidence-based interventions such as using signature strengths of character in a new way were
found to make people happier (and less depressed) for up to six months after the intervention
concluded (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). In the realm of engagement, for many of
us, flow is experienced in a social context: e.g., having a good conversation, playing or listening
to music, dancing, playing a team sport (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990). By encouraging young adults
to share their strengths with one another other, they can find others who have similar skills and
interests, and expand upon their similarities both by working together and relating to one
another. Allowing participants to identify their interests and to be grouped by their interests with
new and different people and work together with them, increases opportunities for new
friendships and even flow (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990). Working toward a common purpose with
others who share similar interests can also increase creativity, engagement and awe (Peterson,
2006).

Meaning, too, is derived from other people. For example, by working together in groups
and feeling the other-praising emotions of awe and elevation, individuals may feel as though
they are a part of something larger than themselves (Haidt, 2006). Meaning pulls together
people’s ideas about who they are, the kind of world in which they live and how they relate to
people and environments around them (Steger, 2009). Relationships are the knots that hold
together the strings that are the “sense” of our lives. Positive relationships with others have the
power to instill within us exhilarating feelings of awe, to the point of elevating us, a capacity that
the sense of “we” can have on an individual (Haidt, 2006). As Steger (2009) explains, there is
evidence that having high quality relationships fosters one’s ability to understand how one fits
with the world. As participants’ relationship skills and relationships are enhanced through the
program, they will be able to develop a more coherent sense of their place in the world around them, reducing lingering senses of confusion and/or worthlessness.

As the benefits of forming and maintaining positive relationships are paramount to our well-being, I propose the development and implementation of a college-based curriculum that uses research-based positive psychology practices and interventions geared toward building and sustaining positive relationship skills and thus, positive relationships. It is my belief that this program will offer young adults the opportunity to acquire and refine their relationship skills and create new connections with people in comparable circumstances. More specifically, the program aims to focus on teaching young adults about and allowing them to practice different styles of interacting and communicating that have been empirically shown to be conducive to building good relationships.

The ultimate goal for the participants is to use these tools to successfully forge positive relationships with their peers, and others in the future, in an effort to increase their overall well-being. Through the teaching and practice of positive psychology principles and interventions, the curriculum will help build well-being as well as serve as a preventative measure against clinical depression. The positive interventions that will be instituted in the relationships curriculum include character strengths, appreciative inquiry, supportive listening, high quality connections and active-constructive responding.

Positive interventions

Positive psychologists have spent the past decade or so accumulating a body of evidence demonstrating that happiness-increasing strategies, such as positive interventions (PIs), stimulate increases in well-being (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2012). PIs have established effectiveness in increasing well-being and/or reducing negative symptoms in randomized, controlled
interventions (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). All of these PIs are relatively brief, self-administered, and non-stigmatizing exercises that foster positive feelings, thoughts and behaviors rather than directly aiming to fix negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2012). Now, researchers are focusing on breaking down the elements of PIs and figuring out what characteristics they have in common, and which PIs are most effective on the individual and organizational level. A positive intervention is an evidence-based, measurable act meant to increase well-being as well as work performance through the development and maintenance of individual and collective strengths and capabilities. Successful interventions are characterized by the impetus for habit-formation through focused attentional processes.

Research has identified several specific positive interventions that make people lastingly happier (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). For example, listing three good things that happened each day and why they happened and using one’s signature strengths of character in new ways were both found to increase reported levels of happiness and decrease reported levels of depression up to six months later. Another intervention, the gratitude visit, where participants were given one week to write and deliver a letter of gratitude to someone in their lives, caused large positive changes for one month. Altogether, the findings of this study indicate that positive interventions can and do produce lasting positive effects on well-being.

Moreover, Sin & Lyubomirsky (2009) did a meta-analysis of fifty-one positive intervention studies in order to determine common factors that contribute to the efficacy of these interventions. Overall, the results provided support for the notion that positive psychology interventions significantly enhance well-being and decrease depressive symptoms. Still, individual factors have been found to impact the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions, including depression status, self-selection and age of participants as well as format
and duration of the interventions (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Based on the results of their meta-analysis, Sin & Lyubomirsky encourage clinicians and practitioners to incorporate elements of positive psychology into their clinical work.

Evidence-based

PIs must be empirically-based, that is, the formulation of the intervention must be acquired by means of scientific observation or experimentation that have been shown to be effective. Theoretical evidence should be gathered, that is, that PI should be assessed by how well integrated it is into accepted psychological theories. For clarification, take the concept of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, 2008) as an example. Appreciative inquiry is grounded in theoretical evidence, that is, the strength of giving and receiving gratitude is based on the theory that an optimistic life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in ourselves and others may be strongly related to well-being, in contrast with a pessimistic view of the world. Learned helplessness theory (Seligman, 1990) also provides an anchor for appreciative inquiry, as it suggests that well-being arises from how people interpret the events of their lives, and if recognizing and appreciating the best in people and organizations represents a life orientation towards the positive, then there is theoretical evidence that it should effectively promote flourishing.

Evaluative evidence is the other piece needed, wherefore the PI is tested to see if it can actually be implemented out in the world and if it is actually efficacious. For example, appreciative inquiry summits have been conducted outside the controlled conditions of the lab, with long-lasting positive results, such as increasing levels of engagement, imagination, innovation and productivity in organizations, affirmatively evaluating the effectiveness of it as a PI (Cooperrider & Goodwin, 2011).
Well-being as the end goal

Inherently, PIs need to have the end goal of increasing well-being. All of the positive interventions and concepts in the curriculum work toward this goal. For instance, according to Cooperrider (2008) the concept of appreciative inquiry (AI) is “the systematic discovery of everything that gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, effective and flourishing and most capable in economic, ecological and human terms” (p.3). AI involves the skill and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to “apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential, involving the mobilization of whole system appreciation through the crafting of the unconditional positive question” (Cooperrider, 2008, p.3). Likewise, Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton (2011) describe high-quality connections (HQC) as “short-term, dyadic positive interactions at work, school or home and the positivity of these connections is known by how they feel for the people involved and the beneficial outcomes they produce” (p.2). The focus of HQCs is part of a broader interest in understanding the foundations and the impacts of positive interrelating at work which include individual and collective flourishing (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011).

Successful positive interventions

Habit-formation

The sustainability of interventions is immensely important, and thus maintaining these practices through habit-formation is crucial. Based on personal research, one of the central mechanisms underlying successful PIs appears to be the cultivation of virtuous habits through focused attention. Beginning all the way back with Aristotle, the idea of habit crops up. Aristotle believes that happiness only occurs after the full development and exercise of our human capacities or virtues “in conformity with excellence,” (Melchert, 2002, p.190). Declaring
that our virtues are not state-like, e.g., emotions or capacities, but rather, trait-like, e.g., dispositions or habits, Aristotle reasons that to have a certain virtue is to have developed a habit of choosing and behaving in ways appropriate to that virtue. Therefore, we can only learn these virtues by practicing them and applying them to novel situations. It’s a “virtuous circle”; we become excellent by performing behaviors that ultimately become habitual. Aristotle’s mantra is that isolated actions do not breed excellence; rather they are a by-product of habit. Thus, for a positive intervention to be successful as well as enduring, we must repeatedly hone virtuous habits – at the individual level as well as the organizational level. A curriculum that compels participants to regularly exercise the practices learned during the various modules creates the opportunity for habit-formation.

Attention

Positive interventions work at the very basic level through exercising our attentional skills to make moments of microchange (Saarinen, 2008) into habits that last and can create a lasting culture. For example, attention has a very powerful role in forming high quality connections (HQC). Attention or mindfulness for relationships or being in the moment with your partner and really paying attention to what they are saying and what they need is characteristic of the three of the four facets of HQCs: trust, respectful engagement and play (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). In addition, appreciative inquiry questions are examples of specific, micromoments of change that can positively impact the quality of our relationship interventions, as long as we are paying close attention to the question that is asked and the given response (Cooperrider, 2008). For example, appreciative inquiry questions that focus on understanding the individual and why they are the way they are and why they do the things they do, in return
energizes people because they recognize the attempt being made to really appreciate who they are, their core being (Cooperrider, 2008).

One can see this again in HQCs where our attentional skills work to build trust through close and supportive listening. Relatedly, listening engenders trust, and others don’t want to say too much if they don’t think the other person is paying attention or listening. This kind of listening requires such close attentional skills because it is important to remember one is not trying to relate what their partner is saying to something that they are doing. Rather, what is paramount and can do wonders for developing the relationship is really focusing on what the conversation partner is saying (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). Therefore, being a good, active listener is incredibly important, and probably the most essential aspect during an interaction to cultivate mutual respect and liking (Dutton & Ragins, 2007).

**Format of the curriculum**

The curriculum is going to be implemented as a semester-long program beginning in the fall of the students’ freshman year of undergraduate education in the common room or similar area located in the respective dorm. The target population is the first-year college students living in the dormitories of a larger university (more than five thousand students). There will be four different modules introduced to the students by their resident advisor. Resident advisors will be taught how to administer the program during their own training by way of a “train the trainer” model. No course credit will be given for the completion of the program; rather it will be administered as optional for the students.

Initially, the first module of the program will provide participants an overview of positive psychology and the rationale for teaching relationship skills. Following that, each module of the curriculum will first provide participants an overview of the particular concept and positive
interventions being taught through a PowerPoint presentation. The detailed information about each concept in this paper will be provided to the students in addition to the various documents contained in the appendix. Afterwards, the resident advisor will introduce different interactive activities to explore further how these concepts are used in action (see Appendix A for a more detailed description of the course).

Measurement

The key outcomes that I hope to generate center around preventing depression, increasing subjective well-being as well as increasing the quality of close relationships. I want the social community of the university organization to function at a higher, more close-knit level. I will measure my outcomes with many self-report measures taken at baseline (before intervention) as well as post-intervention, and at a 3, 6 and 12 month follow-up.

In order to determine subjective wellbeing status, pre- and post- intervention, the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) (see Appendix B for a copy of the scale), which is a 20-item inventory measuring positive affect and negative affect, and Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985) (see Appendix C for a copy of the scale), which is a brief 5-item tool to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one’s life, will be administered. The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised scale (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) (see Appendix D for a copy of the scale) will also be administered pre- and post- intervention to determine the quality of the participants’ relationships pre and post intervention. Finally, the Beck Depression Inventory, a self-report rating inventory that measures characteristic attitudes and symptoms of depression (Beck, et al., 1961) will also be reported pre- and post- intervention to gather data on any outcomes relating to
preventing depression (due to copyright, a copy of this scale cannot be provided in this Capstone).

**PART II – Outline of Curriculum**

**Character strengths**

*Character strengths and positive psychology*

One of positive psychology’s major areas of focus is the good in life, attempting to answer the question: what makes for good character? The premise behind the strengths aspect of positive psychology is that individuals have the ability to benefit when they focus on the qualities and actions that come naturally to them, that they enjoy doing and that they do well (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths are largely stable, universal capacities that manifest through our thoughts, feelings and actions (Niemiec, 2013). In the field of positive psychology, they are widely considered to be the building blocks of human flourishing (Peterson, 2006)

Values live in our heads and are part of how we think but a definition of character requires taking action – putting these values into action. The study of character strengths is really about seeing who we are and who others are. When we truly “see” another person for the qualities they embody, they flourish and open up (Niemiec, course lecture, January 12, 2014). Character strength work is about identity and naturally entails going beyond the typical and really getting to connect and understand whom each other is (Niemiec, course lecture, January 12, 2014), rendering it an ideal introduction and segue into the rest of the curriculum.

The concept of character strengths is one of the most important backbones of positive psychology, and specific interventions focused on developing character strengths have been found to have many beneficial impacts on the psychological well-being of children as well as
adults (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Toner, Haslam, Robinson, & Williams, 2012). Notably, research shows positive correlations between the exercise of character strengths and various positive outcomes, such as life satisfaction, achievement, health and wellness (Niemiec, 2013). While all of the 24 character strengths contribute to life satisfaction in one way or another, in an internet study of 5299 adults, Park et al. (2004) have found that the strengths most strongly correlated with happiness are love, hope, gratitude, and zest.

Though applied research on the 24 character strengths is in its early stages (Niemiec, 2013), there is still great interest in applying the existing research on character strengths to varying disciplines. Some domains ripe for application include positive psychotherapy (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006); various forms of coaching, ranging from executive to life, and parent coaching; use with children, adolescents, teachers, and school systems (Fox Eades, 2008); in positive education (Geelong Grammar School in Australia, KIPP Schools); and faculty development and teaching (McGovern & Miller, 2008).

VIA classification of strengths

For years, psychological research has been primarily concerned with the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of psychological disorders. This central focus resulted in the development of classification manuals such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM, American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The DSM provides a language to converse about what is going wrong with one another, yet it does not contain any system to communicate about what is going right. Working in the emergent field of positive psychology in an effort to research positive traits and psychological resources, Peterson & Seligman (2004) introduced a classification system based on virtues and character strengths, the Values in Action
The VIA includes six universal core virtues and 24 character strengths derived by historically and cross-culturally reviewing philosophical and religious texts (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Virtues are assumed to be universal, socially desirable, individual difference constructs. Virtues are differentiated from character strengths, which are observable traits, or values-in-action, demonstrated in consistent behaviors across situations. Character strengths are the psychological processes that define the virtues, or rather, the pathways to displaying a virtue. For example, the virtue of humanity is exemplified through the strengths of love, kindness and social intelligence.

Therefore, the VIA is a “widely used framework for helping individuals discover, explore, and use those qualities that are strongest in them—[that is,] their character strengths” (Niemiec, 2013, p.1). The system has a conceptual structure, and is descriptive rather than prescriptive; it was created to thoroughly describe what is best in human beings (Niemiec, 2013). It accounts for individual differences in strengths and contends that character strengths are plural, wherefore we are never just really expressing a single strength, but rather a constellation of strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). An individual’s top, or “signature” strengths are the ones that are often the most stable over time, yet do have the capacity to change in response to significant life events or singular efforts at changes in one’s lifestyle (Peterson & Seligman, 2003).

**Benefits of character strengths work**

A coinciding goal of a formal education, no matter what time in one’s life, should be to help develop one’s strengths to the highest degree, in conjunction with the positive psychology
notion of making the lives of individuals fulfilling and satisfying. Good character is precisely what people look for in their leaders, teachers, colleagues at work, what parents look for in their children, and what friends look for in each other (Peterson, 2006). Thus, the language of character strengths serves as an excellent consensual nomenclature through which we can identify, communicate and appreciate the best qualities we see in others and ourselves (Peterson, 2006). Furthermore, highlighting individuals’ personal strengths has already been shown to be successful in the field of education. A study at the University of California – Los Angeles found that the students who were given feedback about their strengths and taught how to recognize them and integrate them into their lives showed demonstrable increases in self-confidence, self-reflection and direction (Clifton & Harter, 2003).

Character strengths in curriculum

For practitioners working with strength-based approaches, Niemiec (2009) offers a three-step process of aware, explore, and apply. Initially, the first step is for the client to become more aware of their character strengths and understand how to strength-spot within themselves and others (Niemiec, 2012). Next, exploration entails the application of an action plan or goal targeted to improve upon a particular strength, such as looking to character strength paradigms in one’s own life or an example in the humanities (literature, movies, etc.) (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Finally, the apply portion of the model is perhaps the most critical for maximizing benefits, and can be carried out through empirically validated interventions such as using one’s signature strengths in new ways.

Drawing upon Niemiec’s (2009) Aware-Explore-Apply model for character strengths, the first part of the module on character strengths will show students how to identify their own signature character strengths through use of the VIA. Students will take the VIA online and keep
an inventory of their results. Following the completion of the VIA, the RA will lead a discussion about character strengths.

Beyond solely detecting a catalog of one’s own strengths, an emphasis on strengths of humanity is of great interest. The humanity strengths include the interpersonal strengths of love, kindness, and social intelligence. The focus on cultivating love toward oneself and/or others increased feelings of social connection and positivity toward others (Hutcherson et al., 2008) as well as positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and mindfulness in general (Fredrickson et al., 2008). The approach of sharing good news with a person who responds in an active, enthusiastic, genuine, and positive way (active-constructive responding) is beneficial for both conversation partners and their relationship more broadly (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher 2004). Shelly Gable, explains that the key character strengths that are involved in this process are love, social intelligence, and self-regulation (Niemiec, 2013). Learning what these specific strengths of humanity are and how they appear when they are being exercised is paramount for an individual to be able to notice and develop them within him or herself.

For the second part of the module, the emphasis will be on using one’s signature strengths. Studies show that using your signature strengths more often in new ways can improve your well-being. For example, using one’s signature strengths has been shown to improve interpersonal effectiveness and other aspects of personal performance (Biswas-Diner, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011). Regularly using signature strengths has also been associated with greater psychological well-being, less stress, more goal achievement and lower depression levels up to 6 months later (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011). In another university study, incoming freshmen were given a catalog of their signature strengths before arriving on campus and were prompted to use and build on these strengths during the year. At the end of their first year,
compared to a control group, the students were characterized by higher levels of academic self-efficacy as well as life satisfaction (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005).

The third part of the strengths module will center on recognizing and affirming character strengths in others. Participants will form into groups of three in the lounge area or common area. All three participants will take part in the “character strengths 360” exercise, also referred to as a “strengths interview.” In this activity, each individual asks the other two group members to name strengths they’ve seen exercised by the individual and share an example of when they have seen the individual use that strength (Niemiec, course lecture, January 12, 2014). The underlying purpose of the exercise is that by spotting instances wherefore the individual was observed exercising his or her character strengths, we are being mindful of good character being put into action, and thus we are inherently valuing and placing close attention to others’ actions. Learning how to look for what individuals see as the best in themselves and each other teaches us how to appreciate and affirm the good in a person, with the potential to further strengthen the relationship (Niemiec, 2014).

**High quality connections**

Dutton and her colleagues (2011) have identified that a way to boost strong relationships is to build high quality connections (HQC)s with the people in your lives. HQCs are defined as “short-term positive interactions between two individuals that result in both parties feeling revitalized and reenergized” (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011, p.2). HQCs literally and figuratively enliven people and are characterized by four signature features: felt vitality and energy for both parties, felt mutuality, positive regard and physiological changes – literally life-giving (Dutton, 2003; Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). For instance, instead of just simply engaging in small talk e.g. “how’s it going?”, we could ask a peer questions such as “what was the best part
of the day?” or “what keeps you going at work?” listen intently to the answer and participate actively in the conversation. This type of close listening not only enables us to interact in a deeper modality, but it also conveys interest and respect for each other. Dutton (course lecture, March 1, 2014) describes HQCs as analogous to a healthy blood vessel that connects two people, supplying vital nutrients for the relationship. HQCs are flexible, strong, and resilient and a pathway to greater openness between two people and greater emotional carrying capacity, which Stephens et al., (2013) define as “the relationship’s capacity for the constructive disclosure and expression of more positive and negative emotions” (p.3). I believe that all of the elements of HQCs, when taught as a part of this curriculum, will provide students the opportunity to practice how to form HQC with regards to their own relationships and help them accomplish higher levels of well-being.

People in an HQC are more likely to feel a heightened sense of positive energy (Quinn & Dutton, 2005). The quality of a connection is felt through a sense of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951). Being regarded positively signals a sense of feeling known and loved, or being respected and cared for in connection (Rogers, 1951). HQCs also encourage a feeling of mutuality. Mutuality is the impression of possible movement in the connection and is bred from mutual vulnerability and responsiveness when both participants are completely engaged and in the moment (Miller & Stiver, 1997). These feelings broaden individuals’ thinking, reduce negative arousal, increase cooperation, build resilience, enhance self-image and improve psychological health (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014).

Evidence suggests that HQCs improve individual functioning through affecting cognitive, physiological and behavioral processes (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011). For example, Ybarra and colleagues (2008) conducted experimental studies testing the effects of HQCs with
results suggesting that brief interactions with others have the ability to improve one’s cognitive processes, in terms of the speed of processing and working memory performance. Furthermore, HQCs are an excellent means by which individuals develop and mature, enhance and enrich the identities of themselves and others as well as form attachments to their communities (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Dutton et al. (2011) identifies four pathways to achieving these HQCs: task enabling, respectful engagement, trust and play.

**Four pathways to forming HQCs**

One strategy to forging HQCs is task enabling, defined as ‘interpersonal actions that help someone complete or perform a task’ (Dutton, 2003). Task enabling takes form in many different ways in a connection such as helping one another (e.g. providing assistance), and nurturing (e.g. providing emotional support) (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014). Interpersonal provision of information as well as emotional support both have the ability to enhance our perspective-taking skills as well as feelings of gratitude toward one another, which increase the quality of one’s connection (Dutton, 2003). When we task enable each other, we feel a greater sense of self-worth and utility which functions as a springboard for further efforts to build a connection (Dutton, 2003).

Respectful engagement between friends is another one of the four pathways to foster HQCs. When friends engage each other respectfully, they create a sense of social dignity that is emboldening and invigorating, making interactions less surface-based and much more meaningful (Margolis, 2001), and thus, important elements of the foundation of a friendship. In respectful engagement, both individuals are completely engaged in the interaction, rendering it significant which consequently displays respect and promotes continued engagement (Kahn, 1992). For example, when peers are participating in a conversation, one way they can exemplify
respectful engagement toward one another is by maintaining eye contact, staying away from using their cell phone and providing indicators (verbally and non-verbally) that they are paying close attention. When you feel that respectful engagement exists and it is clear the conversation partner honors and values you and your contributions, your self-esteem is elevated and you feel a deeper bond with the individual affirming you (Dutton, 2003). Respectful engagement enlivens us, increasing our sense of our ability to act both in relation to other people and with respect to ourselves (Dutton, 2003).

To foster respect, there are four strategies that individuals may employ, and when used in tandem these tools can encourage quality connections (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014). The first strategy is conveying one’s presence and withholding judgment by being psychologically available and not assuming we know what is going on for another person (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014). According to Meerloo (1967), enjoyment of conversations is not rooted in “making sense” but rather from “making contact.” Supportive communication, by way expressing one’s views and opinions while minimizing defensiveness and maximizing clarity is the second strategy (Dutton, 2003). Third, effective listening requires empathy and being active, centering one’s attention on the speaker with the intent to learn more about his or her point of view (Dutton, 2003). Communicating affirmation is the fourth strategy, and it entails going beyond simply being present to searching for the positive potential in others (e.g. one’s appropriate exercise of character strengths), and recognizing this potential publicly (Dutton, 2003).

Trust is the third pathway leading to HQCs and is considered the act of demonstrating to another person the confidence they are dependable and will meet our expectations (Dutton, 2011), trust is one of the most important elements to the success of a relationship. The ability to
have confidence in the words and actions of another displays a feeling of reliance and acknowledgement. In an institution, trust is built through the sharing of resources such as valuable information, seeking the input of others, allowing others to exercise influence and using inclusive language (Dutton, 2011). Sensitive language and actions are other important aspects of trust such as the sharing of valuable information, appropriate self-disclosure, giving away control and responsibility, and soliciting and acting on input (Dutton, 2003). We further establish trust by the words we do or do not say, including accusing others of bad intent, demeaning others, and punishing people for mistakes (Dutton, 2003). Individuals may work together and depend on one another in order to achieve joint goals (e.g. work together on teams to complete activities) to create feelings of trust and increase the quality of their connections. (Dutton, 2003).

The fourth and final pathway to developing HQCs is play. Play is defined as the participation in a game with another individual where the goal is to have fun (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014). Play is a hard-wired connection builder (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014), develops over one’s lifetime and is viewed as a specifically human capacity as well as a direct consequence of human society. Play is founded upon love (Sandelands, 2010 as cited in Dutton, 2003). When individuals are in play, they often transcend their selves and are actively engrossed in the task at hand (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). In an observational study in a community hospital billing department, Dutton and colleagues watched as employees came up with elaborate play activities including things like squirt gun fights and sunshine breaks rendering the department a source of energy for the people in the unit. Dutton (2003) found that overall these connection-as-play activities were successful in reducing stress among participants, taking people outside their normal roles and behaviors and therefore enabling them to see and know each other through a new lens.
**HQC in curriculum**

The HQC module will first teach students the theory behind HQCs while also exploring various ways in which these connections can develop and be maintained. The main focus of the module will be on the development of skills that enrich these connections such as conveying presence, being genuine, communicating affirmation, effective listening, and supportive communication.

There are a variety of interventions that will be applied during the course, beginning with the crafting and presentation of a “positive introduction,” in an effort to demonstrate respectful engagement. Participants will break up into groups of four. The positive introduction is more about identifying character strengths and less about looking at talents and will require participants to think about a time when “you were at your best” (Pawelski, course lecture, September 5, 2013). The story must have a beginning, middle and ending and should take about 3-5 minutes for the speaker to disclose. The listeners should be practicing close listening skills, and try to strength-spot during the telling. Afterwards, the listeners should tell the speaker which particular strengths they heard in the story, and what parts of the story stood out to them. Listeners will take turn in the speaker role.

Next, participants will partner up and take part in a trust activity such as blindfolding a person and having them rely on a classmate to experience the world for 10-15 minutes (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014). In this activity both partners need to be very communicative since not only is what you say and do important, but what you don’t say and do while guiding your partner affects them just as well. Participants will get a better grasp of all of the different ingredients involved in truly trusting someone.
To illustrate further what is meant by respectful engagement, students will split into groups of 3, with one person in the role of the observer, one person as the storyteller, and one person as the listener. The storyteller’s job is to tell the listener about a situation where he or she experienced disrespectful engagement in any realm (work, school, home) and in any capacity (e.g., person distracted and playing with cell phone, person not very responsive). The listener will practice effective listening tactics while hearing the story and the observer will make note of the listening behaviors used and propose any alternative techniques they might add. Afterwards, all three will discuss what they observed and then take turns filling each of the roles until everyone has had a chance to be the speaker, listener and observer.

Next, participants will regroup into pairs of 2 and have brief conversations (two minutes or so) where they will practice being present and withholding judgment and their close listening skills in general. They will also practice asking opening questions as conversation starters (e.g., I’m curious about you, what’s something you love?). This exercise is based on the research and practices of Jane Dutton as taught in a course lecture (Dutton, course lecture, March 1, 2014).

As a final exercise, the pairs of two will find another pair and form a group of four and brainstorm different ways to add the element of “play” in their relationships. Examples of integrating play into the dynamics of one’s relationship may include texting funny photos or stories to a friend, playing games with each other, playing with animals together, singing karaoke, making art together, telling jokes, and taking sunshine walks together. These connections-as-play activities will be useful for allowing participants the chance to see and know each other differently and to inject vibrancy and engagement into one’s relationships (Dutton, 2003).
Appreciative inquiry

In 1980, David Cooperrider was conducting research on organizational behavior and observed that when interviews focused on the negatives or the problems at the clinic the participants’ energy was diminished and they were left discouraged. Yet, when the interviews centered on asking about the positive and what was working well at the clinic, the subjects displayed much more energy and enthusiasm for their work. With a focus on what was working and what was valuable, the good seemed to expound upon itself (Cooperrider, 1990). He termed the process “Appreciative Inquiry” or AI.

Cooperrider’s work has led to much more research, understanding and practice of AI, which has been shown to be applicable to an endless array of situations. In particular, Cockell & McArthur-Blair (2012) described a collegewide AI summit in Tompkins Community College with the goal to see the strengths and potential of the individuals and inspire them. In this higher education setting, the AI summit was ultimately successful in creating an appreciative institutional culture and adding an appreciative lens with which to frame relationships among students. In this college study, success was determined by the ability of participating groups to stay focused and achieve the shared goals for institutional planning, leadership development and other college functions that were related to the vision statement outlined at the summit.

Specifically relevant to the proposed curriculum in terms of building relationships, asking questions is crucial to getting to know someone, learning about them – but are we asking the right questions? No one tells us what we should be asking or what particular things we can say in order to be life-giving to the conversation. As Whitney & Cooperrider (2000) put it so eloquently, “Appreciative Inquiry seeks out the best of what is to help ignite the collective imagination of what might be” (p. 5).
All too often, there are individuals who are uncomfortable or unsure when it comes to successfully beginning or navigating through a conversation with a new acquaintance (i.e., figuring out ways to connect, what to say in order to dig deeper and forge meaningful connections). In their daily interactions with the environment, people often focus and ruminate on the negative events in their lives. All lives are shaped by both good and bad events, but bad events wear off more slowly than good events (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). This is true even in the case of relationships where the effects of bad characteristics will exert more influence over the relationship outcome than the beneficial effects of the good characteristics (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). The AI process is different and novel in that it allows people to focus on the positive aspects of life and relationship pursuits. It then permits individuals to savor these good moments through prompting them with positive questions to discuss them in greater deal.

AI is similar to the character strength work in that it is all about recognizing, affirming, drawing out and building upon the best in one another (Cooperrider, 2008). The practice of asking positive questions not only brings out the best in people and organizations, it also amplifies and magnifies the most “positive life-giving possibilities” for the future (Cooperrider, 2008, p.3). What we focus on has the capacity to increase, and if we focus on the positive qualities around us, particularly those within our friends and family, we have the ability to give them power.

*Appreciative Inquiry in curriculum*

During the teaching of the appreciative inquiry concept, the RA will demonstrate specific ways of interacting that will bring out the best in each other and each others’ strengths in order to foster more deep, meaningful quality connections. For instance, the name of this mini, adapted
AI Summit for the course will be “AI: Seeing and understanding who we are individually.” Empathy/perspective-taking are huge parts of building healthy, successful one-on-one relationships (Dutton, 2003). These two elements can be built throughout the process of trying to really understand one another in the particular/individual ways in which we each want to be understood. Individuals know themselves the best, which is precisely why inquiry is so important.

The initial process and core activity for this module is the interview or practice of asking AI questions to one another. The interview has the potential to create a relationship and discover common ground. Watkins and Mohr (2001, p. 14), define inquiry as “the process of seeking to understand through asking questions.” Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) propose that the AI interview creates the space for six freedoms in a relationship:

1. Freedom to be known in relationship
2. Freedom to be heard
3. Freedom to dream in community
4. Freedom to choose to participate
5. Freedom to act with support
6. Freedom to be positive

Beyond that, the interview allows for storytelling, a process in which participants are able to discuss their personal experiences with others. It allows both conversation partners to form a basis of trust, which is one of the four major strategies involved in forming HQCs (Dutton, 2003).

Students will ask each other appreciative questions that get at the understanding of what they feel are the best qualities about them, how they want to be seen, how they want to best
interact and what each partner can do to relate to each other in more positive, constructive, appreciative manner in order to really understand each other. During the AI interview, speaking and close listening by each participant is crucial in order to focus on an outlook that is positive and possible.

Sample questions to ask each other during the AI interviews might include: “Tell me about something you really like?” “What is a story of you at your best, a high moment for you?” “What are 3 best qualities that others would say they see in you?” “What do you value most about yourself?” “Share with me a few times in your life when you can look back and say that you felt really good about yourself.” This sampling of questions is based on Mohr and Watkins’ (2002) generic set of questions.

Additionally, there will be a great emphasis on the use of language: a lot of change can occur in the way individuals talk to each other (Cooperrider, 2008). Certain words like “but” can be cut from our verbal interactions with one another and replaced with “at the same time,” and special attention can be paid to our tone of voice and other subtle verbal and non-verbal nuances that change the way our words are perceived. Another thing that factors into possible miscommunications is that individuals don’t always pay close attention to each other in conversations. Often times we focus exclusively on ourselves than each other, which can be detrimental for our relationships. Participants will thus be expected to practice the skills they have already learned about respectful engagement during the module on HQCs.

**Capitalization and active-constructive responding**

**Capitalization**

The final module will focus on the complexities involved in relationships, with an emphasis on positive processes. Positive emotional exchanges are the building blocks
comprising stable and satisfying relationships (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). Positive events themselves are likewise pertinent to our personal and interpersonal wellbeing (Gable & Reis, 2010). Participants attending the course will be able to practice positive ways of interacting as well as experience how important one’s response style is in garnering positive outcomes.

Until recently, psychologists have primarily focused on how people respond to the bad events in their lives, with an absence of research that looks at how people respond to good news (Gable & Reis, 2010). There is a great deal of existing research that examines the ways in which people use their social networks for support when bad things happen, which we distinguish as social support (Gable & Reis, 2010). Social support is important in the process of handling not only major life events but also smaller, everyday problems. The body of research on social support provides evidence that the process of seeking out others, the response of others to the support-seeker’s needs, perceived availability of supportive others and the size of one’s social network all influence one’s ability to cope with negative events (Gable & Reis, 2010).

Experience sampling studies conducted by Gable and Haidt (2005) suggest that positive events occur much more often than negative events, usually at a ratio of about three to one. Therefore, a focus on the positive and how we respond to the positive in one another’s lives are also important to consider. Research has also shown that even though positive events occur at a higher frequency than negative events, people benefit more when they do not treat positive events as routine (Gable & Reis 2010). For example, the positive intervention of “three good things” or the systematic notation of the positive events in one’s life has been shown to enhance well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). In a similar vein, research by Bryant, Smart &
King (2005), has provided evidence that when people reminisce about positive events, they also experience greater well-being.

Subsequent work (e.g., Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006) found that the manner in which people respond to good news that is shared with them significantly predicts the quality of their relationships. One of the most prominent ways that people react to positive events is to share them with others (Gable & Reis, 2010). The term capitalization refers to making the most out of, or capitalizing on, positive events (Langston, 1994). Research on capitalization has found that the act of telling others about a positive event as well as the effect of the response of the person with whom the event was disclosed has direct consequences for the quality of the relationship (Gable & Reis, 2010). In their studies Gable & Maisel (2008) found capitalization to be a very frequent occurrence, with participants telling at least one other individual about the best thing that happened to them during the day between 60% and 80% of the time.

A common finding is that capitalization leads to increases in positive affect, greater life satisfaction and greater belongingness (Reivich, course lecture, March 29, 2014). There is a direct relationship between sharing of positive events and increases in positive affect and life satisfaction, with a common finding that when people share positive events with others, they experience more positive effect, well-being, self-esteem and less loneliness (Reivich, course lecture, March 29, 2014). Another pertinent finding was that the more people they told, the greater the benefits because relaying events to others enhances one’s long-term memory of the event. Perhaps most important, the way in which the “listener” of the positive event responds to the sharer is crucial in determining the effectiveness of the process of sharing (Reivich, course lecture, March 29, 2014).
Experience sampling studies conducted by Algoe and Haidt (2009) suggest that when good events happen to people, they spontaneously tell or want to tell other people about their good feelings more than 80% of the time. In college-student studies, these findings were replicated, with capitalization occurring even on seemingly small events such as “sleeping in” which was commonly relayed as a positive event by this population (Gable et al., 2004; Reis et al., 2009).

**Capitalization attempts and close relationships**

People assume higher levels of responsiveness from those with whom they have close relationships with than those with whom they are more distant (Reis et al., 2004). As a result, the presence or absence of proper responses to their attempts to capitalize is especially important. Along the same lines, friendship norms dictate that friends should share in each other’s joys and sorrows (Reis, 1990). Responsiveness, therefore, is very important for relationship development and maintenance. Studies on communication in relationships corroborate the notion that understanding, acceptance and support all play significant roles in the effectiveness of communication in ongoing relationships (e.g. Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002).

One component in particular, validation, has a well-documented role in the growth of strong, positive relationships. “All other things constant, people prefer to affiliate with those who approve of their world-view, which is consistent with the theory in social psychology positing that positive feedback may strengthen attraction to the source of that feedback” (Berscheid & Walster, 1974 as cited in Gable & Reis, 2010, p.211). Ostensibly, a focus on individual response-style to the good events in the lives of each other is a key ability to hone when attempting to maximize the quality of our relationships.

**Responding to capitalizing**
Gable et al. (2004) created a measure that examined perceptions of how individuals respond to a shared positive event – the Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA). Empirical research found that there are four types of reactions to capitalization included in this measure: active-constructive responses, passive-constructive responses, active-destructive responses and passive-destructive responses (see Appendix F for a simplified table of the four response styles with examples for clarification).

Active-constructive responding signals responsiveness to the partner and concern for his or her well-being and growth, and involves the expression of sincere excitement or enthusiasm and the demonstrated desire to learn more details about the shared positive event. Passive-constructive responses are those in which the responder says very little or nothing about the details of the event, does not ask any questions about the event or comment on its meaningfulness to the sharer (Gable & Reis, 2010). As Gable and Reis (2010) describe: active-destructive responding entails an attentive involvement but with negative feedback, often done by pointing out negative implications of the event, minimizing the significance or reframing the event. Finally, passive-destructive is where the disclosure of the event is ignored for the most part, with the responder either changing the subject or redirecting the conversation to focus on him or her (Gable & Reis, 2010).

Active-constructive responding

Active constructive-responding (ACR) is the only response style that experiences benefits. In active-constructive responding, it is critical to remember to consider your non-verbal communication such as tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, and body movement (Dutton, 2003). ACR increases relationship satisfaction, intimacy (understanding, validation, caring), trust, daily happiness, and relationship quality and decreases conflicts (Reivich, course lecture, March 29,
It is also important to keep in mind that only responsiveness to positive events predicted daily positive and negative affect, life satisfaction, and feelings of acceptance while incidences of “social support” (responses to negative events) did not (Gable & Maisel 2009).

If your partner does not give ACR, your relationship is at a much higher risk to dissolve (Reivich, course lecture, March 29, 2014). In dating/cohabitating couples, their PRCA score, also known as their composite score of ACR relative to the 3 other response styles, predicted break-up in 3 months (Bemis, 2008). Gable, Gonzaga & Strachman (2006) replicated this study in the lab with heterosexual couples, videotaping their interactions of capitalization attempts and looking at which type of response the partner gave, finding that a lack of ACR in these couples was associated with break-ups 3 months later.

Though enormously beneficial to the development and maintenance of positive relationships, there are some very real difficulties with being actively-constructive. Some difficulties include: fear of encouraging false hopes, raising egos, or identifying legitimate problems (seeing possible downsides) (Reivich, course lecture, March 29, 2014). Although it is important to be genuine and express these concerns to your loved ones, there is a time and a place to do so, and pointing out flaws or downsides should not be the first response that we have to good news (Peterson, 2006).

*Capitalization and ACR in curriculum*

The activities in the curriculum will begin with short clips drawn from popular media sources such as movies, TV shows, and stories which display interactions where an individual shares good news with someone else. Students will volunteer their answer as to which type of response style the listener uses. Then, everyone will vote on which response style is the identified one. The RA will lead a discussion eliciting the descriptors of why it is the particular
response style and students will also discuss the observed reactions by the information sharer. The purpose of this activity is to provide a few models of the varying response styles, particularly ACR, and make sure that everyone is able to distinguish between the different response styles and recognize the possible benefits that are gained when we use ACR in our daily lives.

Next, participants will break into pairs of two and spend time practicing ACR with each other. Each will take turns being the sharer and responder, using real-life examples of good news that has happened to them recently (within the past month or so). Afterwards, the students will discuss what worked well and what didn’t, and propose ways they might better integrate ACR into their daily interactions.

**Limitations**

With the process of instituting any new program in a university setting, there are bound to be difficulties encountered. One issue that needs to be addressed is that it needs to be clear that the program is seen as a way to cultivate extra tools or resources (that are evidence-based) to be used to build relationships and can be utilized whenever necessary. It is NOT an attempt to communicate to people how they should or must act in any circumstance.

Another foreseeable issue surrounds participation. Ideally, the program requires full participation by students, yet there is the possibility that some students might have some skepticism toward a course about building relationships as a subject or positive psychology in general. Still, it seems as if positive psychology is gaining popularity among the young adult population. For instance, in 2006, Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar taught Harvard University’s most popular course, a course on Positive Psychology, and every year there are more and more schools offering positive psychology courses (Pennock, 2013). Regardless, some ways to minimize this
doubt and increase overall participation will be to make sure the program is not incentivized in any way besides personal, internal gain (e.g. the course is not for course credit and is not mandatory). Goals of the program should be very straightforward and explicit and the unbiased presentation of the material is expected.

Bureaucratic roadblocks pose further limitations. It might be challenging to institute this type of program into universities in general, as some may have strict rules about what types of courses they deem is appropriate to their particular school. There are many operational, structural and technical constraints that limit the effectiveness of a school-wide program instituted in the dorms. As the format is very much informal, it is crucial to make sure that the RAs take this leadership position and potential for impact very seriously as part of their job, are trained well and do a commendable job teaching the concepts. The delivery of the program requires a collaborative approach that is characterized by consistency and coherence. It should be maintained that what is being taught is not a one-size-fits all solution. In other words, it might be the case that certain students take to different concepts better than others. Due to inevitable individual differences, participants should just work with whatever they find most useful to their personal situations.

Conclusion

The ConnectMore curriculum purposes to function as a preventative program combatting depression by using positive psychology principles as a foundation on which to build well-being through cultivating positive relationships. Not very often are young adults afforded the opportunity to learn and practice styles of interacting that have been empirically validated to be conducive to building good relationships where they might create new connections with people in comparable circumstances. The efficacy of the program will be tested post-intervention, with a
3, 6 and 12 month follow-up using the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985), Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised scale (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) and the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, et al., 1961).

The proposed course might not be a comprehensive solution to the fight against rising levels of depression in the college population, yet it could very well prove to be an instrumental protective measure with the power to aid students later on in life by providing them with foundational skills on which to fall back on in times of need. If students partake in the course during their first year of college, it stands to reason that they will benefit from enhanced capabilities to build and maintain strong, positive relationships that boost their overall well-being.
References


Niemiec, R. M. (2013). VIA character strengths: Research and practice (The first 10 years). In H. H. Knoop & A. Delle Fave (Eds.), *Well-being and cultures: Perspectives on positive psychology* (pp. 11-30). New York: Springer.


Appendix A

ConnectMore Curriculum

Course Title: ConnectMore
Created by: Hayley Goldenthal, MAPP
Email: hayleyjane127@gmail.com (send all questions and/or comments to this address)
Taught by: Resident Advisors (RAs)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is designed for first-year college students and is not for credit. It is a semester-long course that meets bi-weekly for two hours at a time. The course will begin by reviewing the subject of positive psychology, that is, the study of positive experiences, positive individual traits, positive institutions and practices that facilitate their development. The primary focus of the course will be the psychological aspects that lead to healthy, strong, positive relationships and the practices that help forge them. Topics will include: well-being, positive relationships, character strengths, appreciative inquiry, high quality connections, and active-constructive responding. Every class will begin by a presentation (common format is powerpoint) that introduces the concept being taught, group activities that apply the concepts and applied positive interventions discussion about these concepts.

GOALS OF THIS COURSE
The mission of this course is to provide an understanding of the field of positive psychology and how it may apply to your life. More specifically, the central aim of the course is to use positive psychology concepts in order to help first-year students understand new and varied ways to enhance the quality of their relationships and develop new connections.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and articulate key concepts in the emerging field of positive psychology
- Understand the evidence-based concepts (character strengths, appreciative inquiry, high quality connections and active-constructive responding) and see how they might apply to your own life and the lives of others around you
- Be able to employ these resources in your daily life
- Articulate from first-hand experience with positive psychology activities a perspective on how positive psychology is (or is not) relevant to your life

Recommended Pre-Course Reading:


Session 1: *Introduction to Positive Psychology*

Session 2: *Character Strengths*

Session 3: *Appreciative Inquiry*

Session 4: *High-Quality Connections*

Session 5: *Active-constructive Responding*

Session 6: *Wrap-up and Re-cap – What have we learned? What are we going to use? Likes/dislikes. What can be improved?*
Appendix B

PANAS
(Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988)

PANAS Questionnaire
This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment OR indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week (circle the instructions you followed when taking this measure)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Slightly or Not at All</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Interested 11. Irritable
2. Distressed 12. Alert
3. Excited 13. Ashamed
5. Strong 15. Nervous
7. Scared 17. Attentive
8. Hostile 18. Jittery
9. Enthusiastic 19. Active

Scoring Instructions:
Positive Affect Score: Add the scores on items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect. Mean Scores: Momentary = 29.7 (SD = 7.9); Weekly = 33.3 (SD = 7.2)

Negative Affect Score: Add the scores on items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with lower scores representing lower levels of negative affect. Mean Score: Momentary = 14.8 (SD = 5.4); Weekly = 17.4 (SD = 6.2)

Appendix C

Satisfaction With Life Scale
(Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

____ I am satisfied with my life.

____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied
Appendix D
Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R)
(Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000)

Scale:
The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>1=Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>7=Strong Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I’m afraid that I will lose my partner’s love.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I often worry that my partner doesn’t really love me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I worry that romantic partners won’t care about me as much as I care about them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I often wish that my partner’s feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I worry a lot about my relationships.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I’m afraid they will not feel the same about me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I find that my partner(s) don’t want to get as close as I would like.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I’m afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won’t like who I really am.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. It makes me mad that I don’t get the affection and support I need from my partner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I worry that I won’t measure up to other people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My partner only seems to notice me when I’m angry.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I tell my partner just about everything.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I talk things over with my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I am nervous when partners get too close to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>My partner really understands me and my needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring:**

(adapted from http://www.psych.uiuc.edu/~rcfraley/measures/ecritems.htm):

Scoring Information: The first 18 items above comprise the attachment-related anxiety scale. Items 19 – 36 comprise the attachment-related avoidance scale. In real research, the order in which these items are presented should be randomized. To obtain a score for attachment-related anxiety, please average a person's responses to items 1 – 18. However, because items 9 and 11 are “reverse keyed” (i.e., high numbers represent low anxiety rather than high anxiety), you'll need to reverse the answers to those questions before averaging the responses. (If someone answers with a “6” to item 9, you'll need to re-key it as a 2 before averaging.) To obtain a score for attachment-related avoidance, please average a person's responses to items 19 – 36. Items 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, and 36 will need to be reverse keyed before you compute this average.
Appendix E

The VIA classification of character strengths
(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

1. Wisdom and knowledge – Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

- **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
- **Curiosity** [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
- **Judgment & Open-Mindedness** [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one’s mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly
- **Love of Learning**: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
- **Perspective** [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people

2. Courage – Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

- **Bravery** [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
- **Perseverance** [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks
- **Honesty** [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions
- **Zest** [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

3. Humanity – Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

- **Capacity to Love and Be Loved**: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
- **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
- **Social Intelligence** [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick

4. Justice – Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
• **Teamwork** [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one’s share

• **Fairness**: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance

• **Leadership**: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen

5. **Temperance** – Strengths that protect against excess

• **Forgiveness & Mercy**: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance, not being vengeful

• **Modesty & Humility**: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is

• **Prudence**: Being careful about one’s choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted

• **Self-regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions

6. **Transcendence** – Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

• **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence** [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience

• **Gratitude**: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

• **Hope** [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about

• **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes

• **Religiousness & Spirituality** [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort
### Appendix F

Table of the four response styles to capitalization  
(Gable et al., 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Constructive</strong></th>
<th><strong>Destructive</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active</strong></td>
<td>Enthusiastic support</td>
<td>Quashing the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Dismissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Demeaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That is amazing! I am so happy for you. I knew you would get the job. How did you feel when you found out?”</td>
<td>“Are you sure you want to take it? I don’t know if you’d be successful in that position. You might want to reconsider.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive</strong></td>
<td>Quiet, understated support</td>
<td>Turns focus inward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low energy</td>
<td>Avoiding the news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delayed response</td>
<td>Ignoring speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Oh cool. Nice job.”</td>
<td>“Look at the new shoes I just bought!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

I would like to first and foremost thank my advisor and professor, Judy, who has been such an incredible guide through the process and who has transformed my thinking about my future profession and opened me to so many new insights.

I’d like to thank all of the MAPP community, in particular my wonderful peers, the amazing assistant instructors, and all of the MAPP professors who have imparted upon us so much wisdom and excitement about this burgeoning new field.

Finally, I’d like to thank my family and all of my friends who supported me during this process, not only during the completion of my Capstone but throughout my journey in the program and life in general.