**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Doctorate in Educational Psychology

**EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THERAPEUTIC STORYWRITING ON CHILDRENS’ RESILIENCE AND EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL ADJUSTMENT**

By Laura Elizabeth Harris,2013

A range of different intervention programmes exist in schools in the UK to promote the learning and development of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Surprisingly, there is little systematic evidence which has evaluated the effectiveness of these programmes at enhancing the protective processes associated with resilience. A systematic review of existing literature was conducted to examine the impact of both universal and targeted school-based intervention programmes on the resilience of children with SEBD. Results suggested that the most effective programmes for increasing the resilience of pupils with SEBD are those that explicitly teach new skills whilst also creating a safe and supportive environment. There was promising evidence suggesting that writing about feelings helps children to address the emotional issues underlying their behaviour (Liberman et al. as cited in Macklem et al., 2011), however as yet there are very few studies which have evaluated the impact of interventions which use creative methods on the resilience of pupils with SEBD.

**The empirical paper evaluated whether Therapeutic Storywriting (TSW, Waters, 2004)** can enhance resilience and emotional and behavioural adjustment in primary school pupils experiencing SEBD. Results showed that there was a significant increase in the emotional vocabulary and sense of belonging of pupils in the intervention group (*N =* 21) compared with those in the WLC group (*N =* 21). There were no significant differences between groups on measures of emotional literacy, self-concept and emotional and behavioural adjustment, at any time. The results indicate that TSW is an effective intervention for increasing two significant protective factors associated with pupil resilience, when delivered by trained school staff. Implications for future research and educational psychology practice are discussed.