Positive Schema Structure and Emotional Functioning in Early Adolescence

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What is a schema?

Schema Content

Schema Structure

(Reprinted from Ingram, Miranda, & Segal, 1998)

Why should I care about schemas?

“The mind is everything. What you think you become.”
(Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism, 563-483 B.C.)

“It’s all in the mind.”
(George Harrison)
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Major Goal: Challenge negative schemas

What about POSITIVE SCHEMAS?

Low Negative Schemas ≠ High Positive Schemas

POSITIVE SCHEMA QUESTIONNAIRE


- Optimism
- Worthiness
- Trust
- Success
- Self-Efficacy

Positive Schema Structure in Context
Self-Organization Task
(Lumley & Dozois, 2009)

In this activity, this circle represents you.
You will use this circle to show how much each word is like you

PEER CONDITION
With people my age how KIND am I?

More like you = Closer to the centre of the circle
Less like you = Further from the centre of the circle
Participants

Participants were 112 early adolescent boys and girls aged 9-14 (M = 11.10) recruited from Guelph area school boards and mental health clinics.

(Community n = 70, Treatment-referred, n = 42)

Ethnicity: 83% Caucasian, 5% Asian, 3% Black Canadian, 1% First Nations, 1% Hispanic, 7% other

Measures

SCHEMAS:

Schema Questionnaire for Children (Stallard & Rayner, 2005) (e.g., “No one loves or cares about me”)

Positive Schema Questionnaire (Keyfitz, Lumley, Hennig & Dozois, 2012) (e.g., “I trust others to treat me well”)

Self Organization Task (Lumley & Dozois, 2009)

Measures organization of positive schemas across 3 contexts (i.e., peers, school, family)

EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING:

Children’s Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1981)

Resilience Scale (Young & Waginald, 1993)

Results

Positive Schemas (*B = -.54) are a stronger predictor of youth depression than low Negative Schemas (*B = .31)

Positive Schemas (*B = .70) are also a much stronger predictor of youth resilience than low Negative Schemas (B = .06)

Community Sample:

Positive vs. Negative Schemas

Together Schemas explain 41% of variance in depression and 52% of variance in resilience

Positive Schemas (*B = -.54) are a stronger predictor of youth depression than low Negative Schemas (*B = .31)

Positive Schemas (*B = .70) are also a much stronger predictor of youth resilience than low Negative Schemas (B = .06)
Community Sample: Positive vs. Negative Schemas

After contribution of Negative Schemas, Structure of Positive Schemas also important for predicting

YOUTH DEPRESSION \( (\Delta R^2 = .25, \Delta F(1, 101) = 45.08, p < .001) \)

AND

YOUTH RESILIENCE \( (\Delta R^2 = .06, \Delta F(1, 101) = 6.79, p = .01) \)

Treatment Referred Sample: Positive vs. Negative Schemas

Negative Schemas \( (*B = .55) \) are a stronger predictor of youth depression than low Positive Schemas \( (*B = -.48) \)

BUT

Positive Schemas \( (*B = .80) \) are a much stronger predictor of youth resilience than low Negative Schemas \( (B = .20) \)

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Perspectives on Parenting and Youth Emotional Resilience

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Resilience

• Many proposed definitions and ways to measure
• Ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity
• Inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility

Development of Resilience

• Close relationships key to development of resilience in youth
• Positive parenting behaviours may protect against risk factors

Assessing Parenting

• Parenting assessed through:
  – parent report
  – child report
  – observation
  – composite score

• However....
  – Low agreement in reporting parenting behaviours
  – Each report may relate differently to child outcomes

Our Study

• Participants
  – 42 youth 9 – 15 and a parent
  – Treatment referred
• Measures
  – Resilience: The Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993)
  – Parenting:
    • Child Report of Parent Behaviour Inventory: Parent and Child versions (Schudermann & Schudermann, 1988)
    • Five Minute Speech Sample (Magana et al., 1986)
    – The Family Affective Attitude Rating Scale (Buftock, Schneiger & Dishion, 2005)

Research Questions

• Relationship among perspectives of parental responsiveness and psychological control and youth resilience
Parent’s Perspective

• Importance of child’s subjective perspective and interpretation of parenting

• Parent insight and awareness

• Does high vs. low awareness of own parenting have different impact on youth resilience?

Results

• Youth resilience significantly correlated with:
  — Youth report of
    • parental responsiveness, $r = .65, p < .001$
    • parental psychological control, $r = -.33, p = .05$

Discussion

• Child’s subjective experience of parenting → Youth resilience
• Influence of parental insight

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Showing Up: Student Engagement in an Alternative High School

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Student Engagement

Engagement has been linked to:
Positive learning outcomes
School Completion

A multidimensional construct:
Behavioural Academic
Psychological Cognitive

Teacher-Student Relationships

Student engagement = malleable
Teacher social support & relationship quality can:
facilitate engagement
promote positive outcomes

Extended Attachment

Strength-based learning

FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE

Alternative Education

1. Show up
2. Be respectful
3. Do your best

Individual & unique programming
Strength-based approach to learning
Relationship building

At-Risk Youth

Socioeconomic status
Exposure to abuse/neglect and bullying
Learning difficulties
Family dysfunction, foster care, adoption

Substance use/abuse
Mental health problems
Juvenile delinquency
Teen pregnancy
Research Hypotheses

Students who evidence more secure attachment relationships with teachers will report more positive schemas and social-emotional assets.

Students who evidence more secure attachment relationships with teachers will also report higher levels of engagement.

Participants

Participants were 31 adolescent boys (n=13) and girls (n=18) aged 13 to 19 (M = 16.26 years)

Recruited from St. John Bosco, an alternative secondary school in the Wellington Catholic District School Board

Measures

Attachment – Secure Base Scripts
Relationship Speech Sample
(Bailey, 2010; Adapted from Jenkins, Gass, & O’Connor, 2010)

Student Engagement - Cognitive & Psychological
Student Engagement Instrument
(Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006)

Strength-based measures
Positive Schema Questionnaire
(Keyfitz, Lumley, Henrig, &Doozes, 2012)
Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale - Adolescent
[Cohn, Merrell, Felver-Grant, Tom, & Endrulat, 2009]

Results

Secure-Base Scripts →+ Positive Schemas
Secure-Base Scripts →+ Social-Emotional Assets & Resilience

Secure-base script scores were positively correlated with strength-based measures of:
positive schemas  (r = +.371, p = .031*)
social-emotional resilience  (r = +.380, p = .019*)

Results

Secure-Base Scripts →+ Student Engagement

Secure-base script scores were positively correlated with psychological engagement:
teacher-student relationships  (r = +.410, p = .011*)
peer support for learning  (r = +.348, p = .027*)
family support for learning  (r = +.301, p = .050*)

Implications

Deeper, more secure relationships with staff can promote emotional security in youth

Teacher-student relationships are important in terms of promoting engagement
Educators should spend time building quality relationships with their students

Continue to examine cognitive and psychological engagement from a student’s perspective
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Strengths in Motion: Evaluation of a Strength-Based Bullying Prevention Program

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OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

• Bullying involves use of aggression from a position of power; used to establish dominance and status in peer group (Craig & Pepler, 2003).

  Bullying peaks around ages 11-15 in community samples; about 10% students experience consistent bullying to 40% no bullying (Pepler et al., 2008)

• Successful programs have employed a schoolwide approach (Rigby et al., 2004).

• Successful programs have encompassed:
  - Teacher education
  - Incorporating bullying programs into curriculum
  - Encouraging students to seek help when needed
  - Monitoring students during free time
  - Formulating interventions targeting bullies and children who are bullied (Olweus, 1992; Rigby et al., 2004; Walter et al., 2010).
STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

- A strength-based approach seeks to foster an individual's strengths (Duckworth et al., 2005) that can be developed to promote mental health (Norrish, 2009).
- Previous research has shown support for a strength-based approach:
  - Building coping skills and resilience among children being bullied lowered levels of internalizing symptoms and increased positive factors (Viquez et al., 2009).
  - Individuals with greater levels of developmental strengths were less likely to be the perpetrator and target of bullying (Jones, 2010).
- In our program, this approach was implemented by identifying students' strengths and focusing less on problem behaviours.

THE PRESENT STUDY

- The current program focused on increasing students' awareness of their personal strengths.
- The program aspired to reduce incidences of bullying by promoting protective factors, such as positive classroom climate.
- The primary objective is to describe the program and present the results from our initial evaluation that used a mixed-methods approach.

THE STRENGTHS IN MOTION (SIM) PROGRAM

- Implemented at a Northern Ontario elementary school.
- Workshops for staff were held to provide information on the SIM program.
- Student and parent workshops were held to promote involvement of the community.

A school resource room was used to implement the 4 main aspects of the program:

1. Good Start Centre: New students and their families came to the Centre for orientation sessions that included a strengths assessment, which was used to help integrate the student into the school.
2. Cool Down & Prevention Room: Students experiencing difficulties could come to this room to prevent potential behavioural problems.
3. Good Choices Room: As an alternative to suspension, students could be mandated to spend time here to work on social skills and participate in talking or healing circles.
4. Ambassador’s Club: Meetings with high risk students were held to reinforce strengths and decrease negative activities.

PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE

- Participants included students in grades four to eight from an intervention (n = 50, M_{age} = 11.04) and a comparison (n = 53, M_{age} = 11.53) school in Northern Ontario.
- Measures were completed at 3 time points, 1 month prior to the start of the program (baseline), and at 3 and 8 months after the program had started.
- Interviews were conducted with select staff and an administrator (n = 5) and parents (n = 4) twenty months after program’s initiation.

MEASURES

- Safe School Survey (Totten et al., 2004) assesses students’ experiences of (a) bullying, (b) being the target of bullying, and (c) attitudes towards bullying.
- Strengths Assessment Inventory (Rawana & Brownlee, 2010) serves to identify students’ strengths.
- Classroom Climate subscale of the Diversity, Individual Development, and Differentiation survey (Lupart et al., 2008) evaluates the students’ opportunities to participate in their classroom and their perceptions of teacher support.
- Open-ended, semistructured interviews were conducted.
**RESULTS**

Perpetrating Bullying, Victimization, and Bullying Witnessed

- Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the two schools (intervention & comparison) over time
- There was a significant decrease in levels of victimization over time
- There was not a significant decrease in levels of bullying
  - From T1 to T2 there was a slight increase in levels of bullying; however, there was a decrease in bullying from T2 to T3

**RESULTS**

There was a significant increase in classroom climate over time

**RESULTS**

There was a significant increase in students’ personal awareness of their strengths

**QUALITATIVE RESULTS**

- Overall, interviews with staff, administration, and parents revealed an increased awareness of strengths: “being more aware of one’s strengths and the strengths of others is definitely a positive thing.”
- Staff and administration saw an increase in academic achievement. “If you’re not constantly worrying about being bullied or being harassed then you would be less stressed and able to focus more on your learning.”

**QUALITATIVE RESULTS**

- Parents indicated that the approach made their child “more confident” and “more involved with extra activities, such as gym.”
- Children learned to better articulate their feelings about bullying. “[My child] has been improving and now understands not to bully because it hurts people.”

**IMPLICATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS**

- Using a strength–based perspective has implications for various stakeholders:
  - For educators: strength–based perspective was important for engaging partners
  - For program developers: this perspective was useful in engaging community partners
  - For researchers: this perspective highlights the importance of measuring growth in positive assets, such as strengths
CONCLUSIONS

- First known study to date that employed a whole school-based approach to a strength-based bullying prevention program
- Results indicate that the program was successful at making students more aware of their personal strengths
- The program made the school a safer place by making students more knowledgeable about bullying and how to cope with it
- Stakeholders reported that an overall increased awareness of strengths led to more school and community involvement

THANK YOU

Questions or comments?

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