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Study Summary Form Fields

I. Citation Info

Author(s)
Day, J. D., Borkowski, J. G., Punzo, D., & Howsepian, B.

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Title of Study
Enhancing possible selves in Mexican American students

Source of Study
*Motivation and Emotion*

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Abstract
This project assessed the modifiability of "possible selves" in young Mexican American children. Three intervention conditions were compared in a pre- and posttest design: child-only intervention, parent and child intervention, and a no-intervention control. Following eight intervention sessions, children in the two intervention groups showed significant gains in understanding the characteristics associated with becoming a good
student and in recognizing the value of education in bringing about future occupational goals. Children in the intervention conditions also reported greater interest in becoming a physician, judge, or pilot—occupations they had directly experienced during training. The parent intervention phase contributed little to augmenting the positive results attributable to the child intervention component.

II. Study Description

Intervention Description

• Name of the program/study condition:
  o Possible Me Tree

• Main purpose or general description:
  • “Used to make concrete the idea of growing into strong individuals with sturdy trunks (having a lot of knowledge and skills), four strong branches (school, work, family and friends, and leisure-time activities), and two types of leaves for each branch: red leaves to represent fears for the future (e.g., not graduating from high school, being lonely) and green leaves to represent hopes for the future (e.g., being a college graduate, having many friends).” (p. 81)

• Theoretical background:
  • Possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986)

• Components:
  Child Intervention
  • Eight 1-hour lessons, two per week
  • Lessons contained 5-10 children, instruction from five graduate students and one advances undergraduate
  • Lesson 1 – acquainted instructors and students, establish ground rules, introduce artwork as a medium of expression
  • Lesson 2 – Me Tree introduced, students imagined they were trees, then constructed trees and explained why components of trees related to goals
  • Lessons 3&4 – focused on present selves. Interviewed for jobs as “good learners”, followed by a discussion of good vs. poor learners, and then wrote a poem about good and poor learners; thinking back, thinking while, and thinking ahead
  • Lesson 5 – additional practice in thinking back, thinking while, and thinking ahead; given hypothetical scenarios about completing homework assignments
  • Lesson 6 – discussed hoped lifestyle in future
  • Lesson 7 – explored and experienced three jobs (physician, pilot, judge), with role-playing and props
  • Lesson 8 – liked and disliked activities were discussed, possible jobs, and arrangement of Possible Me Tree
**Parent Intervention**

- Three sessions, each lasting 1 hour
- Session 1 – encourage involvement in children’s schooling, acquaintance with possible selves, followed by discussion and description of Possible Me Tree; instructed to ask children two questions each night about that day’s school and interview them about their hopes and fears
- Session 2 – intervention was further explained, including possible jobs, thinking strategies, and continuing to ask their children questions
- Session 3 – discussed strategies with their children, discussed problems
- Previous studies / evaluations:

**Implementation Elements**

Content elements:
Pedagogical strategies:

**Research Question(s) / Hypotheses**

- “The goals of this study were to determine whether interventions based on the notion of possible selves would positively affect Mexican American students’ views of themselves as learners and enhance their knowledge of the links between their lifestyle and occupational goals in the future and their current academic performance. We also sought to determine whether a parent intervention based on the concept of possible selves would augment the possible selves messages provided to children.” (p. 82)

**Research Methods**

Sample Description:

- Total N final sample (students): 83
  - No-instruction control group: 14
  - Child-only intervention group: 43
  - Combined parent and child group: 26
- Total N final sample (parents): 59
  - No-instruction control group *: 7
  - Child-only intervention group*: 26
  - Combined parent and child group: 26
  *Received only the posttests

- Composition:
  - Gender: approximately equal
  - Location:
    - Grades: 30 third graders, 31 fourth grades, and 22 fifth graders
  - Ethnicity: Mexican American

**Measures:**
• Intervention Specific Questionnaire – 19 statements related to contents of the intervention
  o Rated on 5-point scale
  o Reliability – Cronbach α = .79
• Think About Questionnaire – 17 statements about whether the intervention led to thinking about futures more frequently
  o Rated on 4-point scale
  o Reliability – Cronbach α = .75
• Level of Schooling Questionnaire – 3 questions, 6 options each
• Parent’s Activities Questionnaire – 10 questions about how often parents engage in academically beneficial activities
  o Rated on 3-point scale
  o Reliability – Cronbach α = .75
• Parent assessment – 5 questions over phone about ensuring academic performance
  o Reliability – Cronbach α = .67

Procedures:
• Design:
  o Quasi-experimental
• Times of assessment:
  o Pre-test, post-test, follow-ups (include brief sentence with explanation)
• Assignment method:
  o Level of assignment: classrooms
  o “Initially, children were randomly assigned to either the no-instruction control condition or the child-only condition. All children whose parents attended the parent intervention were later designated as being in the parent and child condition.” (p. 82)

Research results
Intervention Specific Questionnaire
• Instructional groups significantly higher performance than control group

Think About Questionnaire
• Instructional groups marginally higher performance than control group

Parent Behavior Questionnaire
• No significant effects

Level of Schooling Questionnaire
• Marginal effect of fearing discontinued education in instructional groups

• Instruction had effect on number of jobs mentioned with fears, but not hopes or expectations
• Instruction had effect on prestige ratings with hoped-for jobs, feared jobs, but not expected jobs. Parent-child condition generally higher than child-only or control
Summary of results
“Children’s understanding of the characteristics of good learners (e.g., they think ahead, they think while learning, and they think back in time) as well as their knowledge of the importance and value of education to later occupational and financial security improved significantly. More specifically, students who participated in the intervention were more likely to endorse statements affirming the relationship between being thoughtful in the present and school performance and between school completion and desired future goals. Similarly, students who participated in the intervention were slightly more likely to indicate that they spent time thinking about the connection between their current school activities and their future goals.” (p. 97-98)

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Study limitations
• “Explanatory value of prestige ratings, particularly of feared jobs, may be ambiguous” (p. 99)
• No Mexican American physicians or lawyers in the community

Outcome Variables Taxonomy
Thinking about futures
Parent behavior
Hopes, expectations, fears, and prestige

Program Association
Possible Me Tree