Children’s Levels of Contingent Self-Esteem and Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Jonathan Moore
Children’s Contingent Self-Esteem and Social and Emotional Wellbeing

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Acknowledgments

• Supervision given from Professor Marjorie Smith and Dr Karen Majors
• Growth Mindset slides reproduced by kind permission from the team behind Project for Education Research That Scales (perts.net)
Rationale
Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Maslow’s Theory of Human Motivation (1943)

Future in mind
Promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing.

Greater need to promote social and emotional wellbeing.
Rationale
The Function of Self-Esteem

Consultations around children’s social and emotional wellbeing

Differences in self-reports and observed reports of self-esteem (SE)

My parental values...
Global Self-Esteem

‘The ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities’

James, p. 310, 1890
ADAPTIVE OUTCOMES AND Global Self-Esteem

Diener, Diener and Diener, 1995; Diener and Diener, 1995

Diener, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt and Caspi, 2005; Auerbach and Gardiner, 2012; Wild, Flisher and Lomnard, 2004
Global Self-Esteem

- 160 Undergraduate students with on average higher SE were more likely to persist for longer in tasks they can not succeed in.
  
  Di Paula and Campbell, 2002

- Academic achievement and SE scores compared with 3001 British children in years 2 and 6.
- Low correlation ($r=0.12$).

Davies and Brember, 1999
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation with self-esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiating relationships</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosing things about self</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserting self in connection with objectionable behaviours by others</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buhrmester, Furman, Wittinberg and Reis, 1988

*where p>0.05
Emphasis of practice and training

Increased self-esteem \( d = 0.42 \)

Improved outcomes for externalised behaviours \( d = 0.34 \)

Haney and Durlak, 1998; O’Mara et al., 2006

Emphasis of praise and feedback

Increased self-esteem \( d = 1.13 \)

Improved outcomes for externalised behaviours \( d = 0.66 \)

Improved outcomes for internalised behaviours \( d = 0.12 \)

Improved outcomes for internalised behaviours \( d = 0.45 \)
Salmivalli et al., 1999.

- 316 Finnish adolescents aged 14 and 15.
- Completed measures relating to SE and defensive egotism
- Rated classmates for a range of prosocial and antisocial behaviours.
- Self-esteem not associated to bullying behaviours.
- Defensive high self-esteem was related to bullying behaviour.

Concluded that SE may only intensify rather than moderate normative behaviours.
Global Self-Esteem

- Social Feedback
- Physical Appearance
- Academic Competence
- Activities
Competency model

Reflected appraisals model

‘The evaluative aspect of self-knowledge that reflects the extent to which people like themselves’
Brown and Marshall, 2006, p.67
Self-as-object
Vs
Self-as-process

An individual’s perception of others’ evaluations about themselves
- Meta-analysis across 115 studies including over 32,000 individuals, ages 5-58.
- Compared gender differences in specific domains to test competencies and reflected appraisals models.

Gentile and colleagues (2009)

No objective difference in attractiveness

Societal pressures will result in lower self-esteem for females

Boys had greater physical appearance self-esteem than girls (for ages 5-10 and 11-13, d=0.30 and 0.41 respectively)
Competency model

Generally higher examination results will lead to higher self-esteem for girls

Reflected appraisals model

No differences due to girls being more self-critical of abilities

No gender differences at 5-10 and 11-13 (d=-0.10 and 0.01)

HETEROGENEITY OF Global Self-Esteem
the degree to which ones SE depends on meeting particular standards

Sargent, Crocker and Luhtanen, 2006
Contingent Self-Esteem and self-enhancement bias:

Lower contingent self-esteem $\downarrow$

higher global self-esteem

Some supporting evidence that global SE and CSE are related, but at best modest (Wouters et al., 2013).

Example correlation $r=-0.3$

- Self-enhancement bias may lead to inflated positive illusions about oneself.
- A high CSE may relate to ego-defensive behaviours
- There is, however conflicting research (Bosson et al., 2008; Kernis, Lakey and Heppner, 2008).
Contingent Self-Esteem

Activities

Physical Appearance

Social Feedback

Academic competence

Burwell and Shirk (2006) recruited 110 adolescents (mean age 13.62)

CSE measure predicted depression (d=-0.19)

depression measure did not predict change in CSE (p>0.05)
Wouters et al., 2013

240 Dutch speaking 11-15 year olds who reported parents to be more psychologically controlling were more likely to report higher CSE

Roth and Assor (2010)

- 102 Parents of children aged 5-6 filled out questionnaire to assess degree of psychological acceptance given to child.
- Children with poorer emotional skills were more likely to have parents who reported higher psychological control.
Mind-mindedness:

the ability to treat a child:

‘as an individual with a mind, rather than merely as a creature with needs that must be satisfied.’

Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems
- Received positive feedback (intelligence praise, effort praise, or control)
- Completed very difficult IQ problems
- Received negative feedback that they did a lot worse
- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- $N = 128$ 5th grade students
- Standard progressive matrices (Ravens)

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

- Received positive feedback (intelligence praise, effort praise, or control)

- Completed very difficult IQ problems

- Received negative feedback that they did a lot worse

- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- **Control Group**: “Wow, that’s a really good score.”
- **Intelligence Praise**: “Wow, that’s a really good score. You must be smart at this.”
- **Effort (Process) Praise**: “Wow, that’s a really good score. You must have tried really hard.”

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems
- Received positive feedback (intelligence praise, effort praise, or control)
- Completed very difficult IQ problems
- Received negative feedback that they did a lot worse
- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Part 3: IQ Test: Very Difficult

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

• Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

• Received positive feedback (intelligence praise, effort praise, or control)

• Completed very difficult IQ problems

• Received negative feedback that they did a lot worse

• Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
After Setback

“That’s a lot worse”

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Praise Effects on IQ Test Performance:

- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems
- Received positive feedback (intelligence praise, effort praise, or control)
- Completed **very difficult** IQ problems
- Received negative feedback that they did a lot worse
- Completed moderately difficult IQ problems

Mueller & Dweck, 1998
Number of Problems Solved Before and After Setback

- Control praise
- Intelligence praise
- Effort praise
My Study
Question 1

Lower Contingent Self-Esteem

↓

Higher Global Self-Esteem
My Study
Question 2

Lower Contingent Self-Esteem

Better Social and Emotional Outcomes
How do children conceptualise self-esteem and how may they see it to relate to contingent self-esteem and their social and emotional wellbeing
Design

Mixed-methods explanatory sequential approach.

Quantitative data and results → Qualitative data and results → Interpretation
Stage 1

• 280 children aged 9-11

• Completed following standardised measures:
  – Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
These statements are about your general feelings about yourself. Read each statement carefully and think how much that sounds like you. If you strongly agree with a statement, circle **strongly agree**. If you agree with the statement, circle **agree**. If you disagree, circle **disagree**. If you strongly disagree, circle **strongly disagree**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>On the whole, I am happy with myself.</td>
<td><strong>strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td><strong>strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I feel that I am good at a number of things.</td>
<td><strong>strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td><strong>strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td><strong>strongly agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1

• 280 children aged 9-11

• Completed following standardised measures:
  – Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
  – Adapted Self-Worth Contingency Questionnaire
These statements are about how much certain things affect your feelings of self-worth (how positive or negative you feel about yourself as a person). For the following statements, please circle how true the statements are for you.

For example, if you feel it is extremely true for you, circle **extremely true for me** and if it is not at all true for you, circle **not at all true for me**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>not at all true for me</th>
<th>a little true for me</th>
<th>somewhat true for me</th>
<th>true for me</th>
<th>very true for me</th>
<th>extremely true for me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Whether or not I reach my goals in school strongly affects my feelings of worth.</td>
<td>not at all true for me</td>
<td>a little true for me</td>
<td>somewhat true for me</td>
<td>true for me</td>
<td>very true for me</td>
<td>extremely true for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The way I feel about myself as a person <strong>depends</strong> a lot on what people in my life think of me.</td>
<td>not at all true for me</td>
<td>a little true for me</td>
<td>somewhat true for me</td>
<td>true for me</td>
<td>very true for me</td>
<td>extremely true for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other people’s feedback <strong>makes or breaks</strong> how I feel about myself.</td>
<td>not at all true for me</td>
<td>a little true for me</td>
<td>somewhat true for me</td>
<td>true for me</td>
<td>very true for me</td>
<td>extremely true for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How I look physically really <strong>affects</strong> how worthy I feel as a person.</td>
<td>not at all true for me</td>
<td>a little true for me</td>
<td>somewhat true for me</td>
<td>true for me</td>
<td>very true for me</td>
<td>extremely true for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If other people’s feelings about me change, my feelings of self-worth <strong>change</strong> as well.</td>
<td>not at all true for me</td>
<td>a little true for me</td>
<td>somewhat true for me</td>
<td>true for me</td>
<td>very true for me</td>
<td>extremely true for me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1

• 280 children aged 9-11
• Completed following standardised measures:
  – Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
  – Adapted Self-Worth Contingency Questionnaire
  – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
Stage 2

- 6 focus groups of 5-6 children
- Elicited perspectives on self-esteem and protective factors to self-esteem
Stage 2
Themes discussed in Focus Groups

• What children liked to do in and out of school
• What children liked to do to feel good about themselves
• If it possible to tell if someone feels good about themselves
• If it is important for people to feel good about themselves
• What parents can do to make then feel good about themselves
Findings to Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWCQ Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| RSES | -0.28** | -0.39** | -0.31** | -0.31** | -0.42** |

* significant at the p≤.05 level; ** significant at the p≤.01 level.
Findings to Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDQ Subscales</th>
<th>SWCQ Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Social Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Symptoms</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Problems</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Problems</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Difficulties</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Association of SWCQ and Self-Report SDQ Scores
## Findings to Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDQ Subscales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Social Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Symptoms</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td><strong>.26</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Problems</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Problems</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td><strong>.11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td><strong>.12</strong></td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Difficulties</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td><strong>.20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Association of SWCQ and Self-Report SDQ Scores Controlling for RSES
## Findings to Question 2

Association of SWCQ and Self-Report SDQ Scores Controlling for Social Feedback SWCQ Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDQ Subscales</th>
<th>SWCQ Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Symptoms</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Problems</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Problems</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Difficulties</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.18**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings

Contingent Self-Esteem

- Social Feedback
- Academic competence
- Physical Appearance
- Activities
Key Findings

Social Feedback $\rightarrow$ Emotional Symptoms, $r = 0.26$

Physical Appearance $\rightarrow$ Conduct Problems, $r = 0.19$
Key Findings

Social Feedback $\rightarrow$ Emotional Symptoms $r=.26$

‘my dad told me to sit in the corner because he didn’t want me spreading the infection so I opened my stocking in the corner feeling depressed. (Pupils laugh)... Like thank you for being sympathetic. But yeah, sitting in the corner is not a nice way to spend the Christmas.'
Communal Self-Views → Social Feedback \(r = 0.26\) Emotional Symptoms

‘they didn’t really say anything. The best thing they probably did then, was that they didn’t say anything about it. I thought they might tell me never to do that again duh, duh, duh and nagging me for like three hours. But then just didn’t say anything.’
Key Findings

Communal Self-Views \rightarrow \text{Social Feedback} \rightarrow r=0.26 \rightarrow \text{Emotional Symptoms}

‘Even if he corrects someone, he does it in a way to make the other person think well it’s not that big a deal because even though [he] has got a better word he sometimes puts it in a way that it doesn’t really matter because he’s trying to actually help someone else with their work instead of people going round randomly going ‘well did you know that, did you know this’ and just trying to make a fool of the person.’
‘I have seen this before in the playground and in other places. There was this girl, she had glasses and braces and she asked if she could play with these girls and one of the girls said ‘no because you are not pretty enough.’
‘there’s this spag [not clever] group which [I] used to do and there’s this reading comprehension thing and I think like... that I shouldn’t be here because I know that I’m more clever than that. I’ve just got to work hard or something to not be in that group because I know I shouldn’t be in that group, but [the teachers] think that I should.’
‘you try and do something cool and impress someone and make people think that you are cool and a good person then if you messed something up when you are trying to impress a person it makes you look like a bit of an idiot and a bit of a stupid person and a bit full of themselves and a bit cocky and a bit proud to be me and very I love myself. If you didn’t mess it up then they would probably think you are cool. And then if you do mess it up they probably would think you are a complete idiot. When you are showing off and get people on their good side. I’ve tried to do it when I’ve been at a skate park and try to make friends and I’ve tried to do a trick but I fail and I hurt myself and I look like it right twit. It’s not very nice because you think ‘oh my God they are going to hate me.’ Or something like that. It’s not very nice because you know when you try to be cool [you] just make yourself look even worse.’
Key Findings

Social Feedback CSE

Physical Appearance CSE

Reflected appraisals from others
In Summary...

Aspects of children's social and emotional wellbeing relate to the degree to which they depend on the reflected appraisals from others to meet their self-esteem
Physiological: breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion
Safety: security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of health, of property
Love/Belonging: friendship, family, sexual intimacy
Esteem: self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others
Self-actualization: morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts
Mindset

Describing an activity they enjoyed doing:

‘I like doing more difficult things like making stuff, like for my homework I made a book. It’s really fun to do because it’s challenging and you don’t know if you can do it or not but if you don’t you can try again.’

Describing where the pleasure of achieving is gained:

‘finally when I got the trick right that I had been practising for a really long time it made me feel good about myself. That I had achieved something that I had worked for.’
Mindset

Describing someone with low self-esteem:

‘when they’re not feeling like they normally are, they just do what they normally do... They kind of get like bored.’

Desire for mind-mindedness and approaching a task with autonomy:

‘the class teacher marked the work saying ‘well done Sophie. Two house points’ and that was it. It took two days. And I was a bit like that was a waste of time. But looking back on it now, it doesn’t actually matter what the teacher thinks about it it’s what I think about it and if I’m proud of it that’s a good thing.’

Approach to a difficult task:

‘alright, it’s a challenge I will give it a go and if I fail I fail, if I complete it I can complete it.’
Implications

child

Embrace growth mindsets
Theory of Planned Behaviour

Ajzen, 1985

Photo by Gregory Ewanowich
Online Growth Mindset Intervention

Two 45-minute sessions

- Taught about the brain and neural plasticity
- Discussed implications for effort, help seeking, and intelligence

Paunesku, Walton, Romero, Smith, Yeager, & Dweck (2015)
Implications

Group memberships

Peer groups

key adults

child

Embrace growth mindsets

Embrace mind-mindedness perspectives

Alter perspectives of peers (e.g. circle of friends)

Factors that may cause stratification of group memberships
Reduce Stratification of group memberships

Impact of Grouping Children on Ability

- Attainment gap increases
- Increases in-group and out-group comparisons

Campbell, 2014

Promotion of a strong, inclusive ethos in school

- Attitudes to risky behaviour may improve where interventions at individual levels fail.

Bonell, Fletcher and McCambridge, 2007
Duty Guidance

- To support schools to consider their duty in how to:

  ‘prevent [children] from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support’

  HM Gov, 2015

- Identify vulnerabilities in children’s self-esteem
- Increase unconditional acceptance of communal self-views
  - Significant others evidencing mind-mindedness
- Decrease children’s dependence to compare themselves with perceived in and out-groups
  - Greater acceptance of multiple identities
  - Promote broad unifying identities with shared values
Any Questions
References


DECP Trainee Education Psychologist (TEP) Conference 2016

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