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High School Students and Teachers Perceptions of a Computerized Behavioral Skill Building
Program for Increasing Emotional Intelligence

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Method

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to provide an in-depth study to examine the perceptions of secondary student and teacher participants and non-participants of a computerized behavioral skill-building program, *Relate for Teen*, on increasing emotional intelligence and improving positive social behavior.

An in-depth interpretive research methodology will be used to explore changes in students' and teachers' perceptions. Various data sources will include individual interviews with participating students, teachers and non-participating teachers, classroom observations, field notes, student artifacts, which will include complete assignments and journals that will serve to substantiate the observation data.

Research Questions

This study is intended to extend a previous pilot study by Repa and Stern (2000) by asking the following research questions:

1. How do high school students' perceive the *Relate for Teen* computer program? (videotape/interview)
2. How do high school Teachers A (participants) perceive the *Relate for Teen* computer program? (videotape/interview)
3. How do high school Teachers B (non-participants) perceive their students that are receiving the *Relate for Teen* computer program? (videotape/interview)

Researcher Perspective

My personal perspectives and/or bias surrounding the type of materials and content that works successfully with secondary-level students from diverse backgrounds was due to the fact that I have been in the field of education, working primarily in large, urban districts that have high concentrations of students from ethnically, culturally diverse backgrounds as well as learning styles, readiness-levels and socio-economic status. However, I feel that my own expertise, as a former teacher, may guide the research and provide me the ability to relate the stories which unfold from the participants. I used semi-structured, open-ended interview and classroom observations to maintain consistency and structure throughout the process of data collection. I feel confident that I will maintain a professional researcher perspective during the course of the research.

Setting

The study was conducted within the mid-west region of the United States. This area consists of three large, densely populated counties and includes seven independent cities. The region comprises a large metropolitan area that is populated by 6.5 million people. Within this metropolitan area is a large and diverse school district. This study will be conducted in one of the high schools located within this predominately urban school district. There are a total of 18 high schools in this school district.

Specific Site. The specific site is located at an urban high school in a large metropolitan school district comprised of a socio-economically, ethnically diverse student population. The demographics of participants will represent that of the high school, which is comprised of 78%

African-American, 12% Hispanic, 6% Other/Multiracial, and 4% Caucasian. This sample will have a greater percentage, 96%, of non-Caucasian students than the national average.

Rationale for choosing the site. This school district was selected for the primary reasons: The school district contains a student population that is widely diverse in terms of the socio-economic, racial, ethnic and cultural background and cognitive levels. In addition, the high school is conveniently located geographically.

Participants

Students. There will be 15 participants, from grades 9, selected for this study. The researcher believes that this will be a manageable number of participants and will enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the views of the participants. This grade level was selected because it is believed to be a vulnerable age and much can be learned about the students' perceptions at this age. Additionally, this study will include a small number, approximately three, of students who attend Special Education classes. By including students from varied and diverse backgrounds, in terms, of their cognitive abilities, readiness levels and learning styles this will serve to further enrich the study and the knowledge gained. The participants will include 50% male and 50% females. Additionally, it is anticipated that the composition of participants will represent that of the high school, comprised of 78% African-American, 12% Hispanic, 6% Other/Multiracial, and 4% Caucasian. This sample will have a greater percentage, 96%, of non-Caucasian students than the national average.

Teachers All. There will be a total of four teachers selected for this study. All teachers will teach either grade 9. Teachers from this grade level will be selected due to the participating students in the study will be in grade 9.

Teacher A. There will be one teacher in this group, the teacher participant will teach either, grade 9 and will directly facilitate the *Relate for Teen* computer program for the students participating in the study.

Teachers B, There will be three teachers in this group, these teacher non-participants will teach, grade 9. These will be teachers of the students that will participate in the *Relate for Teen* computer program study, but will have no direct involvement with facilitating or using the *Relate for Teen* computer program.

Program Description

The computer program chosen for this study is *Relate for Teen*. It covers more than 350 topics relevant to adolescents. *Relate for Teens* was created using research proven strategies and research from education, psychology and prevention studies. It is a database of media driven examples of best practices in prevention. Underpinning the program is the *Whole Spectrum Learning System*®, a proprietary, technology-based learning method. The learning system includes a collection of scenario based case studies, cognitive frameworks, behavioral training, affective motivation through true video stories, peer modeling videos, interactive writing exercises, media analysis exercises, role play instructions, interactive self-profiles, and interactive, objective assessment exercises.

The program has a sound to text equivalent throughout the program to increase the chance that students with low reading ability or English as a second language can succeed with it. The program has computer based writing exercises with drag and drop word prompts that serve as a bridge to communication for low language level students and type your-own-blanks, which offers open-ended opportunities, for more proficient students. The writing entries will be

saved in an electronic journal, which is password protected for each student and encrypted to further protect students privacy. Teachers A cannot access journal entries without students' permission.

Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

There will be various data sources used and collected for this study that include: a) semi-structured formal Student Interviews, b) semi-structured formal Teacher A (participant) Interviews, c) semi-structured formal Teachers B (non-participants) Interviews, d) Classroom Observations and, e) Student Artifacts.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured were selected due to the ease of developing standardized open-ended questions and the ability to add follow-up questions as information emerges during the course of the interview and study.

Interviews All. Each interview conducted for the study will be semi-structured, one-to-one, face-to-face and will last 20-30 minutes.

Student Interviews. Each of the 15 participating students will be interviewed once during the study at the conclusion of the research. The interview will be semi-structured, one-to-one and face-to-face. It will take place at the high school site, in an available classroom convenient for the time of the interview. The interview will be 20-30 minutes in length. The purpose of the interview is to explore students' perceptions and gain an understanding of students' reaction to the program content. The interview will contain items such as: "Tell me what you liked about the *Relate for Teen*?" This question is meant to elicit students' perceptions on the computerized program. The researcher will record and take notes during each interview.

Teachers A (participant) Interview. The 9th grade teacher that will be directly facilitating the *Relate for Teens* computerized program for the students will be interviewed once during the study at the conclusion of the research. The interview will be semi-structured, one-to-one, and face-to-face. The interview will take place at the high school site, in the teacher's classroom at a time convenient for the teacher and researcher. The interview will be 20-30 minutes in length. The purpose of the interview is to explore the teacher's perceptions and gain an understanding of the teacher's reaction to the program content. The interview will contain items such as: "Tell me what you liked about the *Relate for Teen*?" This is meant to elicit teachers' perceptions on the computerized program. The researcher will record and take notes during each interview.

Teacher B (non-participant) Interview. Each of the three non-facilitating, 9th grade teachers will be interviewed once during the study at the conclusion of the research. The interview will be semi-structured, one-to-one and face-to-face. The interview will take place at the high school site, in the teacher's classroom at a time convenient for the teacher and researcher. The interview will be 20-30 minutes in length. The purpose of the interview is to explore the teacher's perceptions of the participating students and gain an understanding of the teacher's reaction to any change in student behavior after completing the computerized program content. The interview will contain items such as: "Give me an example of a good day and a bad day for _____(participating student)?" This is meant to elicit teachers' perception of students' behavior. The researcher will record and take notes during each interview.

Classroom Observations. The researcher will conduct periodic classroom observations during the length of the study. The classroom observations will include observations of the participating students and Teachers A during the time, after-school, that the *Relate for Teen* program is being facilitated by Teacher A and used by the participating students. Also, the researcher will observe one class period, during the course of the study, for each of the three non-facilitating Teachers B. These observations will be conducted during a regular class period during school hours, at a time when the participating students are in their regularly scheduled class. The objective is to observe the student's behavior and interactions in a setting that is not associated with the *Relate for Teen* computer program.

Student Artifacts. The student artifacts will consist of 24 computerized writing entries that the participating students are expected to complete during the course of the 14-week semester using the *Relate for Teen* computerized program. The program has computer based writing exercises with drag and drop word prompts that serve as a bridge to communication for low language level students and type your-own-blanks, which offers open ended opportunities, for more proficient students. The writing entries will be saved in an electronic journal, which is password protected for each student and encrypted to further protect students privacy. Teachers A cannot access journal entries without students' permission. These writing entries will be used and reviewed to determine whether participating students completed each entry. Completed entries will be checked against students' and Teachers A and B interviews to determine if students' perceptions had an impact on writing entry completion rates.

Data Collection Procedures

Before the study can begin, the researcher will obtain approval from the Human Subject Review Board to conduct this research. Next, permission will be obtained from the school district, the school principal and the participating teachers. After teachers submit a list of all 9th grade students, consent forms will be sent out to both parents and students. A total of 15 students will be selected from those students whom the parents give permission and who agree to participate, this will comprise the sample group.

The study will begin in September and continue through to the end of the semester in January. The students in the study will use the computer program, *Relate for Teen*, several times per week during 8th period, after-school, over a 14-week semester. Teacher A will assign topics for the, *Relate for Teen*, computer program and will organize role-playing activities, facilitate the role-play, and/or lead discussions according to the specific social emotional competence covered that week. The teacher facilitated segment will last approximately five-seven minutes. The teacher will be available for questions related to the computer part of the program, but mainly the students will work independently for the remainder of the period.

Twenty-four topics will be covered, averaging two per week in the following sequence: respect, kindness, paraphrasing, making space for others, giving compliments, name calling, ignoring, racial slurs, bullying, appreciating diversity, predicting feelings, identifying feelings, courtesy, body language, asking questions, expressing thanks, fighting, resolving conflicts, put-downs, sexual harassment, stereotypes/labels, taking someone's point of view, understanding feelings, and identifying with others. Students will complete the assigned topic and writing entry. Students will complete an average of two topics per week in from the computerized assessments

associated with the 24 topics and save their writing entries in an electronic journal, which is password protected for each student and encrypted to further protect students' privacy. Teacher A cannot access journal entries without students' permission.

The researcher will conduct periodic classroom observations of Teacher A facilitating role-play and or discussions with participating students and the students interacting with the computerized program independently. These observations will last the entire class period. In addition, the researcher will conduct a classroom observation, lasting an entire class period, for each of the three non-facilitating Teachers B. These classroom observations will be conducted in order to enable the researcher to observe the participating students in a traditional classroom setting that is not related to the computerized skill-building program, *Relate for Teen*. At the conclusion of the 14-week semester, the researcher will schedule one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with each of the 15 participating students and Teacher A and Teachers B. The student and teacher interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for the student, teachers and researcher. All interviews will be held one-site at the high school, interviews are individual, semi-structured and will be approximately 20-30 minutes in length. The interview questions are meant to provide in-sight into student and teachers perceptions and reactions. In addition, at the conclusion of the study, student artifacts, consisting of the 24 *Relate for Teen* computerized writing entries will be collected and analyzed by the researcher.

Proposed Data Analysis (Bonus Points)

The data collected during this study will be transcribed, then highlighted and sorted into categories, additional information will be collected and compared with the new information and with emerging categories. The constant comparative data analysis will be utilized as new data is

continually collected, transcribed, analyzed and compared against emerging themes. Thus, throughout this study the researcher is constantly comparing indicators to indicators, codes to codes and categories to categories. In addition, triangulation of data sources will be used after collecting information using a variety of sources and methods. Triangulation of data will be possible due to the various data sources that will be obtained during the study and incorporating the various perspectives of each participant, students, Teacher A and Teachers B.

References

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