

Grace White

COME 122

Article Notation

Acuña, M. A., & Kataoka, S. (2017). "Family communication styles and resilience among adolescents." *Social Work*, 62(3), 261-269. doi: 10.1093/sw/swx017

This article is about how adolescents react to trauma, looking at how some young people overcome, while others develop PTSD, a disorder that can have a large range of negative effects. While there are many factors to be considered in the development of PTSD, this article looked particularly at how family relationships might impact how adolescents recovered after traumatic experiences, with an emphasis on how the families communicate, if they communicate about the trauma at all. They looked at how open families were when it came to communicating, which helped show how comfortable the adolescents would be with communicating about issues in general. In addition to this, what sort of things the families and the adolescents included in communication were examined, looking at how choosing what to expose and what not to expose in the course of a story affected communication and thus PTSD.

With this all in mind, the researchers looked at the general theory of inhibition and disclosure to come up with a hypothesis. The theory states that people want to share their experiences and that it is more healthy to do so. Thus, based on this, the researchers predicted that the more open a family and the adolescent were in the communication process and the more they included while retelling their experiences the less likely the adolescent was to develop PTSD, as the family would in part act as a buffer of sorts.

The researchers conducted a study so that they could test their hypothesis. In this study, they gathered a diverse group of 98 Californian students, many of whom were from

impoverished school districts, all of whom attended school sanctioned mental health counseling, and of which 13 were in high school and 85 in middle school. These adolescents were then screened for PTSD using the Child PTSD Symptom Scale, and they completed the Life Experiences Survey so as to measure their traumatic experiences. With these factors accounted for, the researchers were able to move on to communication styles, using a couple of Likert scales in which the adolescent would provide information on how open communication was with their primary caregiver. The students also filled out scales based on what they include when recounting their experiences, like the details, their feelings, and both pleasant and unpleasant feelings associated with the experience. They then statistically analyzed the results of these surveys.

It was discovered that, while openness in communication may not decrease PTSD symptoms or development significantly, problems in communication are strongly correlated with PTSD symptoms. Girls were more likely to have problematic family communication, leading to less openness and higher levels of PTSD. Also, how the adolescents shared their story was not significantly correlated with PTSD symptoms, but it was positively correlated with open communication. All in all, it was deemed important for families to try to replace their problematic communication with open communication, as this is in the best mental health interest of the adolescent, especially if they have had a traumatic experience.