Reconstructing Adolescent Identity within the Context of Family Violence

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Abstract

This article qualitatively explores a psycho-educational strategy, using a visual creative medium as a method for reconstructing adolescent identity within the context of family violence. The psycho-educational strategy was applied with 12 adolescent participants over five sessions with the intention to bring about awareness of the configuration process of identity. Through identifying and naming the different parts of identity, a reconstructed identity can be formed. The findings of the study revealed that through the psycho-educational strategy, adolescents' heightened awareness led to healthier contact-making with the self and therefore facilitated a healthier configuration process of identity. The findings further show that the adolescents became more self-empowered and resilient to change and to redefine who they were within this family violence triad, and had more control in how they foresaw their future.

Keywords: family violence; adolescent identity; reconstructing identity; psycho-educational strategy

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Introduction

Research findings have indicated that mental health services for adolescents in South Africa are limited, and with the increase in mental health problems, it can pose a major threat to the public health sector (Flisher et al. 2012; Kaminer and Eagle 2010). Flisher et al. (2012) further deliberate that an increased number of adolescents in South Africa may have a vulnerability to mental illness due to persistent exposure to social evils such as substance usage and exposure to violence. According to the findings of Du Plessis et al. (2015) and Kaminer and Eagle (2010), mental health needs of adolescents often go unattended owing to the limited focus on prevention, promotion of support services and therapeutic interventions.

In addition to these findings, research on the types of therapeutic interventions and their effectiveness with traumatised children and adolescents are often unclear and need further investigation (Kaminer and Eagle 2010). From the above argument it is evident that there is a need for restorative therapeutic intervention with adolescents in South Africa. The purpose of this study is to explore a psycho-educational strategy with adolescents who have been exposed to family violence. The psycho-educational strategy was used as a tool to facilitate the process of change and aimed to bring about awareness of self and identity in the environment of family violence. This intervention also facilitated the process of reconstruction of identity which often occurs through awareness and dialogue.

Identity Development and Family Violence

Adolescence is defined as a phase of acquisition of independence, separation from the family and the establishment of new friendships and sexual relations. Identity formation is a vital development process during adolescence and refers to the identification with roles, values, beliefs, and lifestyles that mark a person's individuality, and is thus necessary to facilitate a healthy sense of self and well-being (Arnett 2010; Erikson 1968; Kroger 2014; Marcia 1966).

Research further suggests that successful identity development will help the individual to be more aware of his/her strengths and limitations in becoming a successful person.

Identity development derived from the school of Gestalt, which refers to development as a process of continuous change and growth; it is embedded within the organism-environment field and is not separate from the context in which it develops (Jacobs 2005; Joyce and Sills 2010). Identity is regarded as a process of integration and organisation, and constitutes a continuous process of creative adjustment within this organism-environment field. According to Fernandes et al. (2006), identity represents the individual's personal style and individual sense of self in the world.

Self and identity are crucial concepts in the exploration of identity. Self and identity are interconnected, as both are relational and contextual; therefore changes within the self would influence identity. The self, which is a mental construct, plays a facilitating role in the identity formation process and is referred to as consistent beliefs, ideas and self-knowledge that people hold about themselves across different situations and contexts (Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith 2012). Exploring the self and identity in adolescents can therefore provide much needed empirical knowledge on the process of identity and identity reconstruction.

Adolescent development takes place within the organism-environment field, which refers to the context where the individual (adolescent) is part of the environment (family violence), and together they form the organism-environment field and have a reciprocal relationship (Jacobs 2005; Yontef 1993). Family plays an important role in adolescent development, and with a high prevalence of family violence many adolescents are exposed to developing behavioural and emotional difficulties that further impact on their development (Goldblatt 2003; Makhubela 2012; Schwartz et al. 2005). Evidently any disturbance or disruption in the organism-environment field, such as family violence, could impact on adolescent development (Makhubela and Debuso 2013; Schwartz et al. 2009) and hamper healthy integrated identity (Goldblatt 2003; Grobler 2009). Such implications may hinder these adolescents' ability to form interpersonal relationships or attachment bonds compared to those of peers from non-violent homes. Furthermore, adolescents may have challenges relating to issues of autonomy, identity, and intimacy, and may experience difficulty with self-concept development, self-control, and relating to others (Bourassa 2007; Makhubela 2012; Makhubela and Debuso 2013; Swenson and Prelow 2005). Considering the argument presented above, it is evident that family violence is regarded as a field condition that has an influence on the process of identity formation within the context of family violence.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Psycho-educational Strategy

The psycho-educational strategy for this research study is unique in the sense that it is based on a Gestalt theoretical model that focuses on development and growth as a process of constant change within the organism-environment field (Yontef 1993). It is further understood from this argument that the individual is not seen in isolation, but the environment and the person are in a continuous relatedness with each other (Jacobs 2005; Joyce and Sills 2010; Levin and Levine 2012). Adolescents who are exposed to an environment of family violence are always in a process of change and growth; such exposure allows for identity to be configured into different selves as a response to the environment and further impacts on how identity is constructed (Polster 2005).

The psycho-educational strategy consists of therapeutic and developmental skills that facilitate the process of change and aims at bringing about an awareness of self and identity in the environment of family violence and the reconstruction of identity which often occurs within the process through awareness and dialogue facilitated by a psycho-educational strategy. The Gestalt theoretical framework is relevant to this study as it provides a framework for exploring the adolescent within the context of family violence and understanding of the configuration of different selves and reconstruction of identity. This perspective of adolescent identity also contributed towards existing knowledge of identity development in a diverse racial context. It provided an alternative viewpoint for the confrontation and management of identity formation issues experienced by adolescents.

The Phases of the Psycho-educational Strategy

The psycho-educational strategy followed the proposed guidelines of Blom (2006) and Schoeman and Van der Merwe (1996) that refer to Gestalt models which focus on contact-making and awareness, self-discovery, emotional expression, empowerment and self-nurturing as part of the therapeutic process. The psycho-educational strategy was implemented over a five-week span. One session per week was implemented according to different phases as described by Blom (2006) and Schoeman and Van der Merwe (1996).

Initially, the participants were encouraged to become aware of the self by making contact with the self. The activities focused on experience and discovery of the self via contact-making by introducing the participants to a clay medium. The use of clay as a therapeutic medium was viewed as significant, as it played a role in the sensory awareness of participants, which stimulated emotional expression (Blom 2006; Schoeman and Van der Merwe 1996). Contact-making as the first phase was seen as a prerequisite for awareness and strengthening of the self. In the second phase participants made a clay projection of the self as a means of identifying and naming self-parts. This process led to defining the self and owning the projection of the self. The third phase referred to participants' emotional expressions of the self within the context of family violence, focusing on the different roles and emotions the selves elicited. Dialogue between the different selves provided insight on how the different selves could work together in either harmony or dissonance. Projecting and owning of emotions and making contact with unacceptable parts of the selves formed part of the reconstruction process. The two last phases were empowerment and self-nurture and reconstruction of the self; this is where there is the acquisition of skills to integrate the unacceptable selves by redefining the meanings they attached to the different selves.

The Process of Reconstruction of Identity

Corbin and Strauss (1987) conceptualise reconstruction of identity as the process of reconstitution and reintegration of identity into a new concept of wholeness and discovering new and unused aspects of self. Moreover, this concept of reconstruction of identity is also captured by Kerr, Crowe and Oades (2013), who refer to reconstructing identity as the process of narrating, reframing, retelling, restorying, re-authoring, questioning, and reformulating. This provides narrators with the opportunity to make their voices and opinions heard, articulate trauma and loss, demystify their experiences, and refocus on the positives of their experience (Brown and Kandirikirira 2007).

Polster's (2005) theory of population of the selves refers to the process of identity reconstruction of which the tailoring process forms the basis. The tailoring process refers to the restructuring and the reshaping of introjects, which refer to all the ideas, beliefs and attitudes absorbed from the external environment without their being integrated as part of the self. A positive configuration process emerges from the tailoring process which includes identifying the different selves, how they configure in the field, naming the different selves, and by identifying the different roles they play, the selves can be redefined. Through identifying the different selves, the essential selves and member selves are identified. The essential selves are dominant selves and present all the time, whereas the less dominant selves are selves that only emerged in certain situations, the so-called member selves. Redefining the selves would mean assigning different meanings to the various selves (Polster 2005). This process of redefinition will lead to integration, which for the purpose of this article is defined as reconstruction of identity. The process of reconfiguration of the self allows for adolescents to become aware of and identify the multiple selves that were configured. This reconfiguration process further allows for integration and identity to be experienced as a true reflection of the self (Brown and Kandirikirira 2007; Kerr, Crowe, and Oades 2013; Polster 2005).

Methodology

Sampling

Purposeful sampling (Babbie 2013) was used and focused on adolescents who met the predetermined criteria for inclusion (Patton 1990; Suri 2011). The inclusion criteria for respondents were: age group 15 to 18 years; male and female participants; English and Afrikaans speakers from three high schools in a specific community in the Cape Town area; exposure to recurrent family violence; and not being part of any individual therapy or therapeutic group at the time of the research.

Twelve adolescents returned permission forms after their parents had given consent. The group consisted of 11 girls (ranging between 15 and 18 years) and one boy (17 years). Some of the participants came from either nuclear or single-parent families. In two cases, the participants were in foster care. Others lived with extended families

such as grandparents or aunts and uncles. All the participants were from the same socio-economic and race group.

The participants indicated exposure to different types of violence, ranging from physical abuse to self-harm attempts. Most participants indicated that they were directly involved in family violence, while only four indicated that they had witnessed family violence but had never been involved in it.

Data Collection

Observation of the visual creative materials (using clay medium) and the use of a video recorder were used as supportive methods of data collection for the psycho-educational strategy. Thorough observation data were gathered by watching the behaviour of participants and how they engaged with the visual creative material and related it to their experience of self in the context of family violence. Open-ended questions further allowed for the interaction with the visual creative materials, participants could therefore engage with material and express their self-experiences of family violence. The video camera was used to capture these visual interactions which were used as data. The video camera is recognised as a data-collection tool and has been used to verify observational data and to add depth by providing data that cannot be reliably obtained through observation (Caldwell and Atwal 2005; Demuth and Mey 2013).

Data Analysis

The verbal transcriptions of the answers to the open-ended questions in the strategy were coded and thematically analysed according to the guidelines of Braun and Clark (2013). The authors further reviewed, coded and analysed all audio-visual recordings of the sessions of the participants' self-creations to acquaint themselves with the presented data. A retrospective analysis was conducted by means of audio-visual data that gave greater depth to the data and increased the quality and complexity of the data (Caldwell and Atwal 2005; Demuth and Mey 2013). Categorisation of the data was developed further after viewing the tapes. The authors adopted an "open-minded" and unbiased stance, allowing the data to influence the research outcomes. Additionally, the visual data were used to confirm and verify the verbal transcriptions of the research. According to Roos (2012) and Roos and Ferreira (2008), visual representations often reflect the conscious meanings that participants project about a particular phenomenon.

The visual creations of the self were analysed by observing specific objects participants made and how the objects were related to the research question. The audio-visual data were analysed and thematically linked to the analysed transcribed data (Silverman 2010). A comparison between the visual data and transcribed data was done to ensure congruency and to identify any discrepancies between the two. The visual data were

used to confirm and complement the transcribed data, ensuring trustworthiness, validity and reliability.

Ethical Considerations

The project was conducted under the ethical clearance of the North-West University: NWU 00060-12-A1. Permission to conduct the empirical research study at three schools in Belhar, Cape Town, was requested from the Western Cape Education Department. Written informed consent was obtained from both the parents and the participants. The trustworthiness of the research study was ensured by testing the research findings against the four-item criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The data of the research were used to verify and confirm observational data and verbal transcriptions obtained, thereby further increasing the richness and trustworthiness of the data (Bowman 1994; Caldwell and Atwal 2005).

Findings

In this section the findings of the qualitative data obtained from the psycho-educational strategy are reported. Themes referring to change in identity formation were extracted from the thematic analysis of the psycho-educational strategy. The main themes extrapolated and identified in the process of change from different phases of the psycho-educational strategy were awareness and contact with self, discovery of self, expression of self, empowering of self, and reconstructing of self within the context of family violence. Examples of verbal excerpts are included in Table 1.

Table 1: Illustration of qualitative findings

Phases of psycho-educational strategy	*Themes extracted*	*Verbal excerpts*
Phase 1: Contact-making	Awareness of and contact with the self Identifying and naming of different selves Identifying dominant and less dominant selves in family violence	I love playing, it reminds me of when I was little and carefree. It smells like biscuits, so nice; it reminds me of my grandma's house it was homely.

Phase 2: Self-discovery	Discovery of different selves	The smiley face here is my happy part, here is the jokey part and the jokey part is not always real. (P3) This is my angry side; it is a red face. The angry self and sad self comes out when there is [sic] problems between my mom and my real dad and my stepdad. (P7)
	Discovery of dominant and less dominant selves	This one is my perfectionist side and this one is the funny and jokey side and here is my sad side. The red part [referring to projection] obviously would come out because I would feel angry if I see violence or anything that is happening in our house.
	Different emotions and roles of selves in the context of family violence	The sadness side is here, I keep everything inside, this is when I am sad and I am hurt because my mom will either beat me or verbally abuse me, so [I] keep things inside and this causes the sadness. I made the sad part black because it refers to all the bad things in my life. (P1)
Phase 3: Self-expression	Identifying different selves working together as a team and in harmony	My withdrawal or isolating side goes with anger as well; I first get angry, sad, then I will withdraw. (P5) There are parts of me that let me not give up; it [sic] gives me motivation to keep on, to survive. I will call it [the] surviving part of myself … These are the sides that help me to forget about the violence at home. I call it my breakaway sides, where I can forget about what is happening at home. This side also helps me to cope. (P1)
	Identifying different selves working against each other	Some of my sides work together in a way because when I'm angry I would like to bring peace into that to calm me. Instead of just lashing out in an angry rage, my peaceful part/self is the one that will help me to stay calm, I will sit down and think about what to say or do. (P4)
	Identifying selves opposing selves and redefine their relevancy and meaning	The happy side and my friendly side work together as a team against the angry side, fearful side and my sad side, which are my negative sides. (P8) My happy side helps me to cope with my sadness and my anger. There are parts of me that let me not give up; they give me motivation to keep on, to survive. I will call it [the] surviving part of myself. (P1)
Phase 4: Empowering of the self, self-nurturing	Empowering of the self and future self	I have to let my real self come out. I cannot let the sadness take over my life. (P7) The friendly side and happy side have to increase and I have to trust myself to be a better person.(P7) I am a very strong person, [an] individual that can stand on her own two feet, needs no one to help
	Empowerment and self-nurturing	… some violence can break children down, but in my case it made me stronger.(P4) I want it to be different, I don't want to be scared anymore, I want to be free and not pretend any more. I want to break the silence and stand up for myself. (P10) When I was younger I was very quiet, but now I understand what is happening and I raise my voice. I say what I want but I am just standing up for myself. I will fight back if I need to. I won't allow them to walk over me, no more. (P3)

	Resilience and future elements of the self	I want to finish school, go study further and go work. I won't let this get me down. (P5)
Phase:5 Reconstruction of the self	Redefining the roles and meaning of different selves in a family violence context	To bring peace to the anger, I would sit myself down and think rationally about what is happening and what should happen. The two sides it does [sic] work together. If I'm angry I'm not going to think I'm going to speak, so then I will say the wrong things. So if I keep quiet and you keep it in I feel sad and depressed. I would say the creative side needs to increase, the masking side needs to decrease as well as the Gothic side in order to get the unity and to be whole, like fighting with others as well as my sad part also needs to decrease. Also angry side and sad side needs to decrease … My angry side is very strong and the aggression it's coming out … inappropriately. (P2)
	Acknowledging and accepting of unacceptable parts of the self and the relevancy of it	I know the angry side would have been perfect but it is irrational, but actually I think my peaceful side will help in control of myself. I want to reduce my anger side and then my sadness and crying will stop too. Understanding my anger side better will help reduce my sadness and lead to better coping within the family violence setup. (10)

Discussion

The aim of this article is to explore the implementation of a psycho-educational strategy as a method to facilitate the process of identity reconstruction of adolescents in the context of family violence. Different themes extracted from the thematic analysis refer to change in identity formation constructs. Some of the themes that were extracted are in alignment with the different phases of the intervention process and are set out below.

Contact-making Phase

The initial phase of the strategy refers to the contact-making phase, where the participants become aware of the self through engaging with the medium of clay. The main theme highlighted in this phase was awareness and contact with the self to stimulate emotional expression. Through making contact with the self, the participants become more sensuously aware through the smell and feel of clay. In some cases the sensory awareness referred to the smell and feel of clay that elicited earlier childhood memories. This contact-making is seen as a prerequisite for awareness and strengthening of the self (Blom 2006; Schoeman and Van der Merwe 1996). Through the process of contact-making and awareness, the participants made contact with different parts of self, through identifying and naming them, which contributed to the process of change in identity formation.

Self-discovery Phase

In the second phase, the participants had to make clay projections of the self, exploring the self through identifying and naming the different selves, therefore defining the self as well as identifying with the projection. Sub-themes that emerged are the discovery of different selves, discovery of dominant and less dominant selves, different emotions and roles of selves in the context of family violence, and the relationship between the different selves in restoring harmony. These sub-themes are discussed below.

Discovery of different selves. The self was explored by identifying and naming the different selves and by bringing unknown selves into awareness. Reconstruction of the self in this research is based on each participant's ability to go through the process of configuration, to identify, to name and to sort the disparate parts of the self into a unified pattern. The recent awareness of various selves brought about by the psycho-educational strategy could have contributed to change in perception of the self. Participants could identify, name and sort the disparate parts of the self into a unified pattern. According to Polster (2005), this process can lead to healthier and more flexible contact.

Discovering dominant and less dominant selves. Apart from the different selves identified, the participants additionally identified the selves that are dominant and present most of the time as well as the selves that only emerged during certain situations. Polster (2005) refers to the more dominant selves as the essential selves that are always present, while the member selves emerge during certain situations. In the context of the research study, many participants could identify and name various essential selves and member selves. Along with further awareness, the participants discovered more than one member self that could be redefined as an essential self because of its dominant presence. In many cases the realisation and awareness of a member self's dominance can lead to a redefining process of self.

The Emotional Expression Phase

The third phase, emotional expression refers to the participants' self-expressions, focusing on the different roles and emotions the selves elicit, as well as how the different selves can work together in harmony or not. Contact-making with unacceptable parts of selves is highlighted here in this sub-theme.

Discovery of emotions and different roles of selves in the context of family violence. Participants identified and named the different selves in their projections of self, but also described the emotions of the different selves and the roles the selves play in the context of family violence. Through dialogue between the different selves, acknowledgement of and giving a voice to the previously denied selves occurred. The adolescent exposed to family violence may become aware of these opposing poles and emotions and the role they play within a family violence context (Goldblatt 2003). Such

insight may assist with their integration process. Polster (2005), Polster and Polster (1999), and Stevenson (2010) refer to creating synthesis within diversity, and also to the ability to flexibly move between the two opposing poles, as it is important in the integration process. By acknowledging and giving a voice to the previously denied part of the self, the individual will have freedom in the creation of self and meaning (Polster 2005). Becoming aware of the opposing selves and emotions, and the role these play within the context of family violence, may have largely assisted the integration process of identity.

Exploring the relationship between the different selves in restoring harmony. The participants identified the selves they wanted to change or use less when encountering family violence. The participants also referred to selves that were not in harmony with other selves and needed to be used less. By combing the different selves, greater harmony is restored within the self, and greater coping with and control of the selves that seem to surface when present within a family violence context. By exploring the relationship between the different selves, the participants could identify which selves are helpful in conflict situations and which emerged as a result of the conflict. Polster refers to the top dog/underdog split which takes place within the person (Polster 2005; Yontef 1993). The participants also became aware of which selves worked together as a team and which selves they did not need. Through animation and dialogue, which are part of the psycho-educational strategy, the opposing aspects of the person could be brought into harmony (Hoffman et al. 2009). Adolescents exposed to family violence are often confronted with opposing selves, and through this awareness of the diversity of selves and their various roles, they can redefine their meaning and role in their lives.

Empowerment and Self-nurturing Phase

Empowerment, self-nurturing and the acquisition of skills of integration of unacceptable selves by redefining their meanings are explained in this phase. Empowerment of the self is explored within the context of family violence. Findings indicate that the participants were able to reflect on the selves that were resilient in the context of violence and the selves that were not strong. By naming the different selves and understanding their roles in coping with family violence, the participants became more empowered to use the stronger selves to take control within the context of family violence. Moreover, by referring to certain selves, by naming them and giving them an identity, helps the participants to recognise the role the different selves play when they are confronted with family violence. The participants could further identify which of the selves provided them with healthy coping. With such awareness, individuals experience more control and feelings of empowerment in the context of family violence. Identifying the resilient self and the future selves gave participants a sense of self-empowerment as well as hopefulness towards the future (Seginer 2008, 2009).

Furthermore, empowering the self allows for further awareness that would often lead to acceptance of the opposing selves. Such acceptance of opposing selves and increased self-control are depicted by the significant increase in the personal self after participants had gained insight regarding their selves and their various roles through the use of the psycho-educational strategy.

Through an awareness of the empowering selves, the process of resilience is facilitated and positive adaptation to a violent family context can take place. The empowerment of the self in the context of family violence is also related to a future-oriented representation of the self. The participants' reference to a hopeful future and the setting of future goals allows for a sense of predictability and an optimistic orientation towards the future (Becker 1999; Seginer 2008, 2009; Van Manen 1990). Reference to the future and the setting of goals are related to possible selves or future selves that refer to how individuals think about their potential and about their future.

Reconstruction of the Self Phase

Redefining the meaning of the different selves in the family violence context. The theme focuses on the redefining of the self and refers to the participants examining the meanings they place on the different selves and their influence on their behaviour within the context of family violence. Additionally, this phase represents the last step towards the change in the process of identity formation. Examining how these selves developed and reflecting on the relevance of the beliefs and values they were configured from are necessary steps in redefining identity. As participants became aware of the different roles the selves play and how they were configured, they could decide whether these selves still held relevance in their lives. By becoming aware of the different roles and emotions the different selves elicited, the participants could redefine the roles and their meanings by either increasing or decreasing the impact of the different selves. This could contribute to strengthening their coping mechanisms when they were confronted with family violence.

Awareness is the foundation of a healthy configuration process; therefore the goal would be to heighten the awareness as part of the reconstruction process. Through examining the introjects from which the participants' selves are constructed, beliefs and values on which the selves are based can be evaluated. The meaning the participants attach to them can also be examined. This is illustrated through the psycho-educational strategy, where clusters of experiences are named, animated and placed into dialogue with one another through the process of tailoring. Through engaging in dialogue between the different selves, the participants could decide whether the meaning these selves hold were still relevant in their lives. In this process the participants could also redefine the meanings these selves held and in so doing reconstruct the meaning of the selves (Polster 2005).

Tailoring, according to Polster (2005), is a process that needs to happen to achieve reconstruction. For a healthy assimilation of the self, the introject system, that is beliefs and values on which the selves are based, has to be examined. The self- experiences that are based on a faulty introject system are then restructured and reshaped through the reworking of the selves that do not fit into harmony with others. The faulty meaning on which introjects are based are also reframed through the process of tailoring, where participants can then reconfigure both their negative selves and explore their multiple self-possibilities. Reconstruction of the self then takes place as a result of the tailoring process where the reshuffling of the various internal selves takes place, each retaining its own identity and allowing for a healthy, flexible and functioning entity which can be regarded as an integrated self (Polster 2005). Corbin and Strauss (1987) therefore refer to the reconstruction of identity as the process of reconstitution and reintegration of identity into a new concept of wholeness and discovering new and unused aspects of the self. Through this process of reconfiguration, adolescents were able to become more integrated and experience their identity as a true reflection of the self (Polster 2005).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study set out to implement a psycho-educational strategy as a method to facilitate the reconstruction of identity of adolescents within the context of family violence. Given the limited mental health services provided for adolescents, therapeutic interventions with adolescents are a much-needed resource in South Africa. This study can contribute to future research as it explored an alternative restorative intervention in the form of a psycho-educational strategy to facilitate identity reconstruction and significantly inform therapeutic and educational intervention programmes for adolescents exposed to family violence. Research studies often put an emphasis on risk factors and negative consequences of family violence and neglect to explore indicators that can facilitate healthy functioning within the family violence context. This psycho-educational intervention strategy approach is accessible and applicable, as therapists, counsellors and social workers are free to use this medium as a stand-alone intervention or in addition to a therapeutic intervention.

More research on the perspectives of adolescents in relation to their parents and other family members is recommended. The expansion of restorative interventions with adolescents in relation to their parents and other family members within the family violence context is also recommended.

In order to retrieve a more accurate account of the impact of family violence on adolescent identity, future research might consider including participants' parents and siblings' accounts of family violence within the home. Such adequately controlled comparison groups allow for more reliable and valid findings. Future research should account for the effects of demographic variables of sample groups, such as race, gender and age of participants exposed to family violence and how such demographic variables

influence their identity. Finally, an additional requirement would be for more recent, valid, reliable and appropriate self-concept and identity measurement scales to be used on samples in future research.

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