

## Question and Hypothesis

### Assertion

The experience of complex trauma leads to extrinsic motivation in children.

### Questions

1. What is trauma?
2. What is complex trauma?
3. How does complex trauma affect motivation?
4. How does complex trauma lead to extrinsic motivation?

## Abstract

- Addresses the effects of complex trauma on a child's motivation.
- Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory is utilized to understand how complex trauma affects intrinsic motivation in children.
- The theoretical framework is applied to an example for further conceptualization.
- A best practice approach for school psychologist utilizing the Response to Intervention (RtI) model is offered for treatment and consultation.
- Recommendation and future directions for research are provided.

## Literature Review

### Background Information

- Approximately five million children experience a traumatic event each year in the United States (Perry, 2003).
- One in four children are affected by some form of trauma by the time they reach the age of 18 (Perry, 2003).
- The experience of complex trauma leads to impairments in attachment, biology, affect regulation, dissociation, behavioral control, cognition, and self-concept (Cook et al., 2003).

### Definition of Terms

- **Trauma:** a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience
- **Complex trauma:** the experience or exposure to severe stressors that began in childhood or adolescence and occurs repeatedly over time
- **Competence:** the ability to achieve desired goals
- **Relatedness:** the development of a secure and satisfying connection with others
- **Autonomy:** the ability to complete actions independently, through the internalization of values

## Theoretical Foundation

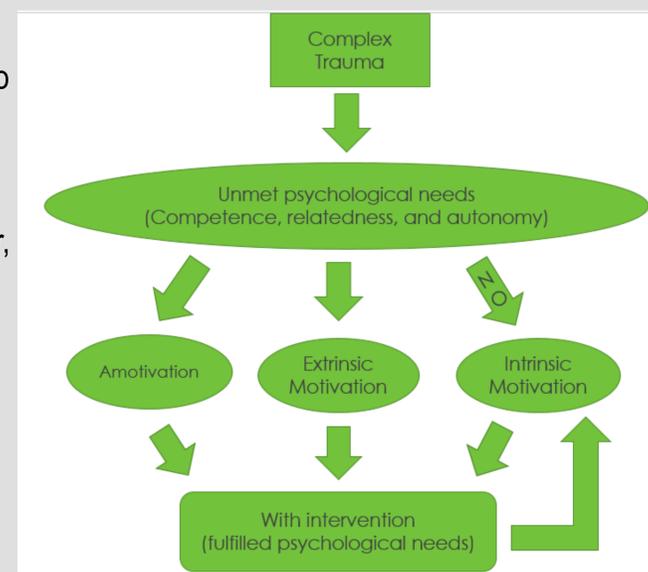
### Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (2000)

Motivation is an essential element of biological, cognitive, and social regulation. Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory is an approach to understand human motivation and personality. The theory considers an individual's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs as the foundation of motivation and personality integration. There are three psychological needs that foster self-motivation: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Individuals are motivated for various reasons; these reasons can be either through intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when an individual is regulated internally and engages in a task because he or she values the activity, is urged into action because of interest, or the task may contain a personal commitment to excel in accomplishing a goal. Extrinsic motivation is less internalized, therefore, it is externally regulated. When an individual's psychological needs are not met he or she may exhibit extrinsic motivation, or amotivation, which is the furthest away from a self-determined motivation.

## Proposed Theoretical Model

The experience of complex trauma affects a child's ability to fulfill his or her innate psychological needs. Children exposed to complex trauma will often result to dissociation as a protective factor to cope with the occurrence and feelings of the traumatic event within one's environment. The utilization of dissociation negatively disrupts and affects an individual's behavior, cognition, and ability to connect with others. This in turn, impacts the child's ability to develop intrinsic motivation, as his or her psychological needs are not met.

In contrast, if the child is provided with an opportunity to develop effective coping strategies and fulfill his or her psychological needs, he or she will develop intrinsic motivation.



## Application of Theoretical Model

A child who has experienced complex trauma and who was reared in an unsupportive environment exhibits a diminished ability to develop intrinsic motivation. In school, this can be portrayed through inappropriate social behavior, agitation, hypervigilance, and struggles in self-regulation. The experience of complex trauma leads the child to express feelings of guilt, shame, self-blame, and helplessness, all of which negatively impacts a child's psychological needs. These feelings are continuously reinforced in school as the child is not provided with a supportive environment to fulfill his or her psychological needs for intrinsic motivation. The child is seen as uncooperative or defiant, and unable to effectively communicate and build relationships with others. He or she will complete tasks through extrinsic motivation to avoid feelings of guilt, shame, or humiliation. However, when a child is provided with a supportive environment and effective interventions, intrinsic motivation is more likely to develop regardless of the trauma history. The interventions provide the child with strategies and methods to regulate negative feelings and develop intrinsic motivation.

## Best Practices

### Response to Intervention (RTI)

#### Assessment

Tier 3: Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory; Child PTSD Symptoms Scale

Tier 2: Intrinsic Motivation Inventory; Traumatic Events Screening Inventory for Children

Tier 1: Draw-A-Person Test; Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children

#### Interventions

Tier 3: Individual therapy; Personal best goal

Tier 2: Group counseling; Lunch Bunch

Tier 1: Project Based Learning

#### Consultation

Tier 3: Referral for family therapy

Tier 2: Student Success Team (SST) meeting

Tier 1: Inservice training for teachers; Back to School Night

## Conclusion and Recommendation

### Conclusion

Children who experienced complex trauma should be provided with a supportive environment for the development of intrinsic motivation.

### Recommendations

Cultural considerations must be taken into account when selecting assessments and interventions.

## References

- Cook, A., Blaustein, M., Spinazzola, J., & van der Kolk, B. (Eds.) (2003). *Complex trauma in children and adolescents*. National Child Traumatic Stress Network. <http://www.NCTSN.net>
- Perry, B. D. (2003). Effects of traumatic events on children. The ChildTrauma Academy. [www.ChildTrauma.org](http://www.ChildTrauma.org).
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55 (1), 68-78. DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.68.