Connectedness contributes to developmental assets and is shaped by school climate, so how can we measure it?

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Measuring Adolescent Connectedness in the Schools:

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- Developer of mentoring programs designed to promote connectedness (see www.UTSAsmile.org)
- School counselor in Boston (1990-1994); School Counseling Coordinator at UW-Madison & UTSA
- Consultant to the Search Institute

ChiChi Allen, Research Assistant, UTSA

- Co-investigator on a longitudinal study of adolescent connectedness and school climate in a school in Massachusetts
Connectedness reflects the disposition to care for and become involved with others. In the adolescent literature, connectedness has been found to predict risk-taking, psychopathology, and various dimensions of psychological health and development, as well as extracurricular involvement and community service.

Yet, no validated measures of connectedness are available.

### Developmental Assets Predictable from the Connectedness to School scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Connectedness</th>
<th>Corresponding Asset:</th>
<th>Does not have</th>
<th>Does Have asset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involved in and feels positively towards school</td>
<td>Bonding to School</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.7 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares for, wants the respect of, works to gain trust of teachers</td>
<td>Adult Role Models</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads regularly, independently, and for fun</td>
<td>Reading for Pleasure</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works cooperatively with and likes one’s own peers</td>
<td>Pos. Peer Influence</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.4 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in and values diversity</td>
<td>Cultural Competence</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.3 (85%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why measure connectedness?

- **Connectedness** is one of the 5 “C”s targeted by youth development programs (Lerner, 2000).
- **Connectedness** predicts both developmental competencies and risk-taking behavior.
- **Connectedness** is, we think, the phenomenon underlying many of the SEARCH Institute’s developmental assets.
- Today we describe a survey for measure connectedness and report research on the link between school climate, assets and connectedness.

Worlds of connectedness in childhood and adolescence
Conventional Connectedness

- FAMILY
  - Parents
  - Siblings
- SCHOOL
  - Teachers
  - School
  - FAITH
- FAITH
- FUTURE SELF
- OTHER CULTURES

Unconventional Connectedness

- SELF (Self-esteem/Identity)
- FRIENDS
- NEIGHBORHOOD
- ROMANTIC PARTNER
Importance of conventionality

Conventional connectedness predicts social competence, achievement, and involvement in extracurricular & volunteer organizations. Kids high in unconventional connectedness but low in conventional connectedness are more likely to engage in delinquent acts.

Connected kids are resilient kids: Resilience at low, medium, and high levels of conventional connectedness

(\(n = 123\) Hispanic and Caucasian Delinquents)

Resilience as (e.g., insight, morality, relationship strength, etc.) is greater for kids reporting more
Hard drug use (red bars) across 3 Levels of Connectedness to Friends (low, med, high)

(n = 123 Hispanic and Caucasian Delinquents)

- The stronger the connectedness to friends (among delinquent youth) the greater the use of hard drugs in the past 30 days.

Why counselors should be concerned about creating a culture of connectedness at school

- Show how connectedness and self-developments (e.g., Erikson’s identity) are complimentary and are necessary for academic and later life success
- Discuss links between attachment, social support, belonging, and connectedness in adolescence
Connectedness as a source and product of self-developments

Connectedness Developments | Self Developments
---|---
High School
Adolescent Connectedness | Identity
Middle School
Pre-Adolescent Connectedness | Industry
Elementary School

Connectedness results from social support, which leads to feelings of relatedness and belonging

SOCIAL SUPPORT
- TEACHERS
- PEERS
- FRIENDS

BELONGING

CONNECTEDNESS

RELATEDNESS

SOCIAL SUPPORT
- PARENTS
- KIN
- SIBLINGS
### Belonging Leads to Connectedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher Support</th>
<th>Positive Peer Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation: 0.00-0.19 = Low, 0.20-0.34 = Med, 0.35 = High, >.50 = Very High

### Teacher activities and connectedness: Immediate and interpersonal vs. ideal and abstract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consistency and Clarity of Rules and Expectations</th>
<th>Disciplinary Harshness (negative relationship!)</th>
<th>Instructional Innovation</th>
<th>Cultural Pluralism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
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The *Hemmingway* measure, its application, scoring and use

- Two adolescent scales: 75 item 13 scale version; and a 55 item version without culture, religion, romantic partner, and each specific parent.
- A child/pre-adolescent scale: 10 scales, 40 item
- Administration time: 20 min. for 75 items; 15 min to 20 min. (at 3rd grade reading level) for 55 items
- Scored manually by taking average of items in each subscale (soon we will have an excel file to do this) or a school could use scantron forms and scanner.

USES IN SCHOOLS

- Measure school climate (grade wide surveys assess impact of school changes)
- Use it to identify youth at risk for under-achievement, substance use, violence
- Estimate areas of connectedness to address
- Use as a measure of the impact of school counseling groups or activities
Contact Information

• For new versions of the manual; for papers on the use or validity of the *Hemingway*; for versions in Spanish, Chinese, or French; for assistance in using the measure in counseling or program evaluation, contact:

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