

Exploring Gender Differences in the Connectedness of South African Adolescents

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ABSTRACT The literature on adolescent development refers to the adolescent's need to be *connected* to others in a meaningful way. However, research on adolescent connectedness in the South African context is limited, particularly with regard to gender influences. This exploratory, descriptive research project therefore aimed at investigating gender differences in the connectedness of Grade 8 and Grade 11 adolescents of the respective racial groups. Data was collected using the Hemmingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness questionnaire. Four hypotheses related to differences between the genders of the sample and the genders of the racial and age groups were tested. The results revealed that the girls in the sample were significantly more connected with regard to most of the variables tested than the boys. The Mixed descent boys and girls differed substantially with regard to connectedness to teachers; the Caucasian boys and girls differed in five domains, while the African boys and girls differed in eight domains. The younger adolescents were also more connected overall than the older ones, particularly the African girls and Caucasian boys. Follow-up research is needed to explain these differences.