

## Exploring the Connectedness of South African Adolescents in View of Cultural Differences

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**KEYWORDS** Hemmingway. Measure of Adolescent Connectedness. Bronfenbrenner. Bio-Ecological Model. Questionnaire. Adolescent Microsystem

**ABSTRACT** The research explored the connectedness of a group of South African adolescents. The sample comprised of 835 students of different cultural groups enrolled at four urban secondary schools. The students completed The Hemmingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (MAC) to determine their connectedness at three ecological levels: (i) to others (for example, parents and friends); (ii) to society (for example, community and school); and (iii) to themselves (for example, self-in-the-present). Data analysis was carried out through the comparison of means and standard deviations, and the testing of the dependency of connectedness with culture. The results revealed that the adolescents were highly connected to the future, self-in-the-present, their parents (especially their mothers) and religion. Significant differences were identified among the three cultural groups, for example with regard to kids of other cultures and reading. The study's limitations were pointed out and recommendations for improving adolescent connectedness in some instances were made.

### INTRODUCTION

All humans have an innate and strong need for *connectedness* (Townsend and McWhirter 2005), although individuals may vary in the strength of this need (Nichols 2008; Schulze and Naidu 2014). Connectedness suggests the degree to which individuals experience the people and places in their lives as personally meaningful and important. Accordingly, Lee and Robbins (2000:484) define social connectedness as "an enduring and ubiquitous experience of the self in relation with the world, as compared with social support, adult attachment, and peer affiliations, which represent more discrete, current relationships". These involvements facilitate comfort and well-being. Individuals who report a sense of connectedness are therefore likely to exhibit positive psychological functioning with regard to self-esteem, life satisfaction and self-efficacy (Allen and Bowles 2012; Crespo et al. 2013). When individuals feel disconnected interpersonally, it may lead to social isolation as well as a lack of resilience against stress and

feelings of futility (Townsend and McWhirter 2005). Studying connectedness is therefore important.

Studying connectedness of adolescents may be especially valuable since this is the time during which an autonomous identity is formed (Erikson 1968). The development of such an identity occurs best through a dialectic separation and connection process. This occurs when parents facilitate the adolescent's psychological separation from them while at the same time supporting connectedness. Thus, adolescence is frequently associated with intensified issues of autonomy and connection (Yu 2011) and in this regard, the 14 to 17 year old group is a high risk group (Portwood et al. 2005), while feelings of *school* connectedness is particularly fragile during early adolescence (10 to 14 years) (Loukas et al. 2009).

The importance of exploring the connectedness of South African adolescents is indicated by the fact that their risk behaviors, which could be related to a lack of connectedness, include violent criminal behavior (Wild et al. 2004); risky sexual behavior (Flisher et al. 1996) and substance abuse (Caldwell et al. 2007). However, an electronic search identified only one South African publication in this regard (Rawatlal and Petersen 2012). The aim of this paper is therefore to report on a descriptive, exploratory study of the connectedness of a group of adolescents in selected schools.

The remainder of the paper reports the theoretical framework, research design, results and a

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discussion of the results. Finally, the most important conclusions and recommendations are presented.

### Theory of Adolescent Connectedness

Connectedness has its roots in Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1988). He emphasised that attachment during the early years, particularly to mothers, plays a pivotal role in influencing the quality of subsequent relationships. However, according to Allen and Bowles (2012), Bronfenbrenner's theory provides the most comprehensive theoretical construct to investigate connectedness of school students.

In Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bio-ecological model, a distinction is made between *process*, *person*, *context* and *time* (the PPCT model). He indicates that human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active human being and the people and objects in the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner 1999). To have an impact, the interaction should occur regularly over extended time periods. Such forms of interaction are called *proximal processes* (P). Examples include parent-child interaction and religious activities. The effect of the proximal processes depends on the characteristics of the developing *person* (P), the environment, the nature of the developmental outcomes and the social continuities and changes that occur over time. The *ecological environment* (C) of the model is a set of nested systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The systems are on a microsystemic, mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic level respectively. For example, in the school setting, the microsystem would include the social networks of family, friends, teachers and peers. The mesosystem refers to school management processes and teaching practices that determine the school culture. The exosystem is concerned with the broader community interaction while the macrosystem refers to education policies and laws. A major factor influencing the outcome of human development within these systems is the *timing* (T) of biological and social transitions as they relate to the culturally defined age, role expectations and opportunities throughout life (Bronfenbrenner 1999). Although the lives of all family members are interdependent, human beings influence their own development through autonomous choice and behavior.

The above model links with that of the Turkish psychologist, Kagitcibasi (2005). She points out that autonomy and relatedness (connectedness) are both basic human needs that develop through parental child-rearing orientations (Kagitcibasi 1996: 183). An individualistic understanding of autonomy implies two dimensions: *interpersonal distance* (separateness or relatedness) and *agency* (agent-like versus pawn-like). She emphasises that a person's standing on one of these dimensions does not necessarily imply a standing on the other dimension although the two are often juxtaposed. Similarly, an individual can be collectivist (subservient to a group) in some situations and individualistic (noncompliant) in others. In line with the above, Bekker and Croon (2010: 909) define autonomy-connectedness as "the need and capacity for self-reliance and independence and for intimacy and satisfactory functioning in intimate relationships".

As noted, parenting orientations facilitate different family interaction patterns. For example, the traditional family is characterised by interdependence between generations in material and emotional domains. This pattern often occurs in societies with low levels of affluence where autonomy can be a threat because children contribute to the family economy and support elderly parents. This style of parenting is often the model in Eastern cultures. In contrast, Western cultures reflect an individualistic worldview. Adult children and their parents do not depend on the economic support of one another. However, psychological interdependence can continue. Thus, different kinds of selves can develop: (i) the heteronomous-related self (high in connectedness and low in autonomy); (ii) the autonomous-separate self (high in autonomy and low in connectedness); (iii) the autonomous-related self (high in both connectedness and autonomy) and (iv) the separated but heteronomous self (low in both connectedness and autonomy). The modes in which individuals express themselves within these categories are different in different cultures (Ryan and Deci 2000).

### Psychological Benefits of Connectedness

Meaningful relations facilitate psychological well-being (for example, Lee and Robbins 2000; Townsend and McWhirter 2005: 191; Offer 2013). Connectedness acts as a protective agent to prevent and resolve intra and interper-

sonal disturbances (Karcher 2002). Anderman (2002) found that higher levels of connectedness in students were significantly related to higher levels of optimism and lower levels of depression, social rejection, and school problems. This was confirmed by other authors (Smetana 2011: 23; Allen and Bowles 2012).

Schools present adolescents with unique opportunities to develop social connectedness. Schools with mentoring programs where older adolescents support younger children promote the connectedness of both parties (Karcher 2005, 2009). Several authors have found that such social connectedness promotes a sense of well-being and good behavior of the adolescents (Blum and Rinehard in Portwood et al. 2005; Jose et al. 2012). School connectedness and the belief that peers and teachers care about them as people and as students are protective factors against problem behavior (Davis-Alldritt 2012). Student belonging is positively associated with students' intrinsic interest in school, academic efficacy and academic achievement (Gutman and Midgley 2000; Osterman, 2000; Anderman 2002; Anderman and Freeman 2004; Nichols 2008), as well as future orientation (Crespo et al. 2013).

Connectedness to school and family seems to buffer adolescents against emotional anguish, suicide ideation, aggression, substance abuse and age of first sexual encounter (Townsend and McWhirter 2005). Karcher and Finn (2005) also found that the smoking habits of friends and siblings and connectedness to friends were strong predictors of experimental smoking. Connectedness to parents and teachers were protective factors that diminished the chances of experimental smoking, although these effects were overshadowed by the influence of friends and peers during adolescence.

Research has shown that adolescent connectedness to parents and families provides a solid foundation to enhance the adolescents' self-esteem, provide support in times of stress and prevent the development of psychological problems that include depression (Townsend and McWhirter 2005). This is important since depression is a significant challenge during adolescence (Houlberg et al. 2011).

Authoritative parents encourage autonomy and independence but are consistently responsive and warm (Abar et al. 2009: 260). Such parenting enhances autonomy and relatedness (Kagitcibasi 1996). A balance between auton-

omy and connectedness to parents develops adolescents' ability to make appropriate decisions (Abar et al. 2009: 260) and improve their coping behaviors (Seiffge-Krenke and Pakalniskiene 2011).

Other authors have indicated the benefits of connectedness to religion. Being religious provides social capital and facilitated happiness (Houlberg et al. 2011). In another study, the association between parents' and adolescents' beliefs in and practice of Buddhism decreased the adolescents' involvement in delinquent behavior (Chamratrithirong et al. 2013). Highly religious students tend to study hard and achieve well academically (Abar et al. 2009: 259, 263). Maternal parenting style moderated the association between parental and student religiosity. Religiosity was also indirectly linked to adolescent self-regulation through a positive association with family connectedness and a negative association with inter-parental conflict.

### **Factors Related to Connectedness of Adolescents**

Numerous factors influence adolescent connectedness. Involvement in community service can influence connectedness to communities. In Canada, the United States (US), and Australia, researchers found that community service inspired civic engagement and feelings of connectedness of students to their communities (Metz and Youniss 2005). Students who engaged in community service developed their community identity and this countered unrestrained individualism. This kind of involvement is often related to parental involvement in religious and volunteer activities (Gallant et al. 2010). It also seems that a strong link exists between the quality of the community service experience and positive attitudes towards such involvement. However, compelling students to do community service could cause resentment (Warburton and Smith 2003).

Student teacher relationships influence school connectedness. Such connectedness is influenced by students' belief that their teachers care about their learning, are interested in them individually and that they are safe at school (Allen and Bowles 2012). Nichols (2008) confirmed that students' sense of belonging to school was significantly related to the quality of their relationships with teachers. Teachers' en-

couragement of students, their humour and their honesty facilitate students' bonding (Glaser and Bellingham 2009) as does fair and effective discipline (Allen and Bowles 2012). School size and participation in extra-curricular activities also affect school connectedness.

A South African study identified factors that impeded school connectedness (Rawatlal and Petersen 2012). These factors included unrealistic education policies, top-down management practices and ineffective discipline strategies at a school management level. At the interpersonal level, peer pressure to resist school regulations was highlighted and many students tended to defy the teachers. At an intrapersonal level, a lack of self-regulation skills, emotional incompetence and lack of a future orientation were identified.

Peer relationships can influence students' perceptions of the school. Nichols (2008) confirmed that students' sense of belonging to school was significantly related to the quality of their interpersonal relationships with other students (whether they were liked or were involved in romantic relationships). Teachers' attention and care could neutralise the absence of friends. Likewise, connectedness with friends could compensate for perceived insufficiencies of schools.

Regarding family connectedness, an international study involving nine countries found that young adults expressed strong emotional bonds with their mothers, their siblings and thereafter with their fathers (in Dwairy and Achoui 2009). In affluent countries, family bonds with the extended family (but not with the nuclear family) become somewhat weaker with age. Sim (2003) examined the father-adolescent relationship in the context of the mother-adolescent relationship with late adolescents in Singapore. It was found that the mothers were more responsive and accepting of individuation than the fathers and also more supportive when needed. This facilitated connectedness to the mothers.

However, feelings of connectedness may be influenced by mediating variables that include age (Schulze and Naidu 2014), and culture (Ki-ang and Johnson 2013). According to Smetana (2011: 105), culture refers to a set of behavioral patterns, or the plans, recipes and programmes of certain groups. Culture influences psychological development, values and behavior, and therefore also interpersonal relationships (Sass et al. 2010).

Individualistic cultures differ from collectivist cultures in how the self is defined (independent versus interdependent); in the kind of goals that are set (personal versus group goals); moral systems that guide social behavior (personal autonomy versus role obligations); and the importance of relationships (detachment from others versus harmony with others). Smetana (2011) identified the US, most of Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand as individualistic cultures. Collectivist cultures were dominant in Asia, South America and Africa. The level of connectedness between children and their families is a key difference between individualistic and collective cultures (Dwairy and Achoui 2009). For example, Arab adolescents in Israel have been found to be more family connected than American adolescents - the Arab adolescents rated higher on emotional, financial and functional connectedness. Likewise, adolescents in three Western countries (France, Poland and Argentina) were less connected to their families than adolescents in six Eastern countries (Kuwait, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bedouins in Israel, Jordan and India). Economic dependency leads to psychological dependency and the adoption of family values.

The above mentioned differences lead to differences in relationships. For example, the emphasis in the US on individuation, leads to greater child noncompliance and conflict with parents in middle childhood in comparison with Japan with its collectivist culture (Smetana 2011). Greater conflict in turn leads to a heightened wish for personal freedom although results are not simple. Violence can occur in intimate relationships in collectivist cultures and cultures are not homogenous. Differences within the same culture can be related to social class, gender, education, religion and ideology. For example, research in eight Arab societies found significant differences in adolescent-family connectedness across the societies with gender, rural-urban and first born versus later born siblings as moderator variables (Dwairy et al. 2006:248). This implies that adolescents may be collectivist in some situations and individualistic in others, as illustrated by the Kagitcibasi (2005) model. However, for Korean adolescents, the maintenance of connectedness with parents generally undermines the attainment of autonomy (Yu 2011).

In all cultural groups, connectedness to the group could be a protective factor. For instance,

Wong (1997) found that for African Americans, strong connectedness to their ethnic group protected them against the negative impact of perceived racial discrimination and was positively related to educational expectations and resiliency. Connectedness to family and school were also important protective factors for Chilean adolescents. The students' connectedness to teachers and schools correlated significantly with parental monitoring, positive family relationships, fewer attention problems, less alcohol use and fewer depressive symptomatology (Sass et al. 2010: 2).

In a study across 30 countries, Georgas and colleagues (in Dwairy and Achoui 2009) found more similarities than differences in emotional bonds between young people and their nuclear family members. They all had strong emotional bonds with, in rank order, their mothers, their siblings, and then their fathers.

With the above as background, the next section describes the research methodology. As mentioned, the aim was to explore the connectedness South African adolescents.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling (McMillan and Schumacher 2010: 137). The selection criteria for sampling included that the students needed to be adolescents from a variety of cultural backgrounds and easily accessible (living in the same city as the researchers). The sample comprised 835 students from Grade 8 and 11, from four diverse schools in a South African city in the province of Gauteng (the financial and educational hub of South Africa). The schools included a large (more than 1000 students) Afrikaans medium school in an affluent area with good discipline and academic results; a large multi-cultural school with poor discipline and academic results; a small, private, Afrikaans medium Christian school and a multi-cultural art school. Of the sample, 238 students were Caucasian, 501 were African; and 54 were of mixed descent. (The rest of the sample selected "other" or did not indicate cultural background.)

Data collection procedures included the use of consent forms for parents and assent forms for the students. All the students completed The Hemmingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (MAC) (Karcher 2000) with the permis-

sion of the author of the questionnaire, during a class period. The MAC is made up of 72 items with subscales at three ecological levels: (i) connectedness to others (for example, parents and friends); (ii) connectedness to society (for example, community and school); and (iii) connectedness to oneself (for example, self-in-the-present). The items in each of the subscales reflected the two primary ways of connecting: through active involvement and through caring (for example, 'I hang out a lot with kids in my neighbourhood' and 'It is important that my parents trust me'). Responses to the items were by means of a five-point, Likert-type scale that ranged from (1) 'not true at all' to (5) 'very true'.

The above mentioned questionnaire was translated into Afrikaans by a qualified Afrikaans-speaking lecturer. The translated version of the questionnaire was then pilot tested with a group of Afrikaans-speaking students of an appropriate age. No changes were recommended.

Data analysis was through the comparison of means and standard deviations. ANOVAs were executed to test the following hypothesis: there are significant differences between three cultural groups on 15 subscales (as indicated by Table 1). The Cronbach's alphas on the subscales were between .704 and .888 except in four instances (self-in-the-present, peers, teachers and future) where the alphas were just below .7. However, it should be emphasised that this was only an exploratory study (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:182). Face validity was judged favourably.

## RESULTS

The results are presented in Figure 1 and Table 1. Figure 1 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the sample on all the subscales.

Figure 1 illustrates that the adolescents were most connected to the future (M=4.2927), religion (M=4.1121), their self-in-the-present (M=4.0670), their mothers (M=4.0659) and thereafter, with their parents (4.0559). They were least connected to romantic partners (M=2.7637), to the people in their neighbourhoods (M=2.8108), reading (M=3.1149) and to their peers (M=3.3576). Interestingly, the adolescents indicated that they were more connected to their teachers (M=3.7546) than to their fathers (M=3.6379), their friends (M=3.4660), or their

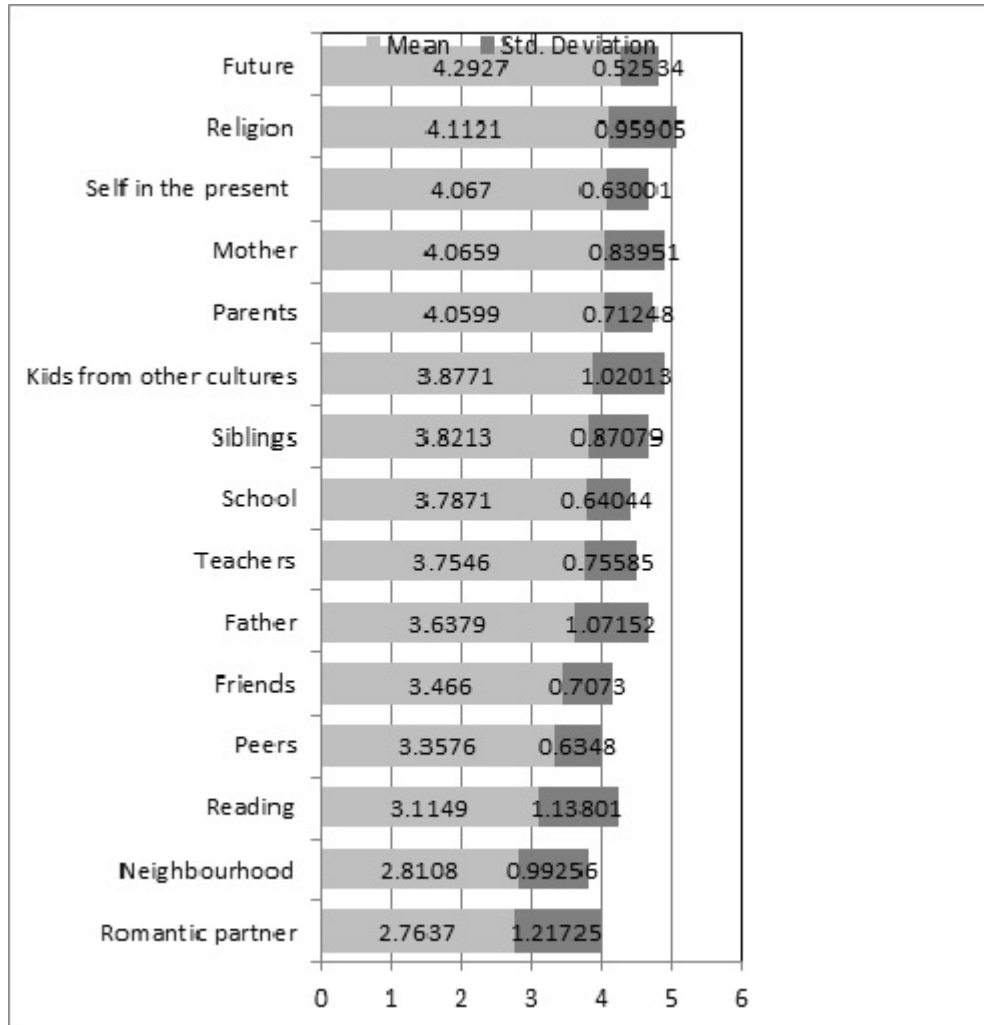


Fig. 1. Means and standard deviations of a group of South African adolescents

peers ( $M=3.3576$ ). However, the variances of connectedness in four instances (kids from other cultures, fathers, reading and romantic partners) are relatively large (std. dev. = 1.02013 to 1.21725) indicating that the students differed greatly in their responses.

Regarding culture, Table 1 indicates the means and standard deviations of the different cultural groups.

A number of important observations can be made from Table 1: The rank order of connectedness for all three cultures is similar; students from all three cultural groups feel most connect-

ed (means greater than 4), to religion, the future and their parents although not necessarily in that order. African and Mixed descent students (but not Caucasian students), were also highly connected to self-in-the-present (means greater than 4). Of all the cultural groups, Mixed descent students feel most connected to kids from other cultures (mean greater than 4). Students from all three cultural groups feel least connected (means smaller than 3), to the neighborhood and a romantic partner. Regarding connectedness to the family, the rank order for all students were: mother, siblings, and then father. Howev-

**Table 1: Means and standard deviations of three cultural groups**

	<i>Caucasian</i>		<i>African</i>		<i>Mixed descent</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Religion	4.2726	1.0000	4.0259	0.9299	4.2654	0.8200
Future	4.2289	0.5522	4.3087	0.5119	4.3494	0.4998
Mother	4.2076	0.8151	3.9984	0.8479	3.9926	0.8995
Parents	4.1109	0.7448	4.0316	0.7117	4.1599	0.6307
Self in the present	3.9768	0.6389	4.1082	0.6257	4.1762	0.5849
Teachers	3.9538	0.6309	3.6696	0.7862	3.8389	0.7735
Siblings	3.9358	0.8486	3.7852	0.8473	3.8296	0.9354
Father	3.9152	0.9601	3.5069	1.0867	3.7509	1.0791
School	3.8193	0.6279	3.7696	0.6411	3.9049	0.6400
Friends	3.6639	0.5649	3.3581	0.7401	3.4969	0.8078
Kids from other cultures	3.6342	1.0645	3.9368	0.9969	4.3210	0.8291
Peers	3.4050	0.5917	3.3340	0.6430	3.4586	0.6277
Reading	3.2903	1.1673	3.0316	1.1152	3.0972	1.2554
Neighbourhood	2.9060	0.9710	2.7669	0.9909	2.8963	1.1338
Romantic partner	2.6245	1.2190	2.8271	1.2080	2.6481	1.2738

er, Caucasian students were more connected to their mothers, fathers and siblings (means of 4.2076, 3.9358 and 3.9152) than the other two groups.

By means of ANOVAs, significant differences between the three cultures were identified in seven instances. Post hoc comparisons with Scheffe’s method illustrated that Mixed descent students were significantly more than both Caucasian and African students connected to kids from other cultures ( $M=4.3210, 3.6342; 3.9368; F=12.965 = p < 0.001$ ). Caucasian students were significantly more than African students connected to: fathers ( $M=3.9152$  and  $3.5069; F=12.217 = p < 0.001$ ); mothers ( $M=4.2076$  and  $3.9984; F=5.130 = p < 0.01$ ); teachers ( $M=3.9538$  and  $3.6696; F=12.107 = p < 0.001$ ); friends ( $M=3.6639$  and  $3.3581; F=15.608 = p < 0.001$ ); religion ( $M=4.2726$  and  $4.0259; F=6.176 = p < 0.01$ ) and reading ( $M=3.2903$  and  $3.036; F=4.153 = p < 0.05$ ).

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of the study was to investigate the adolescent connectedness of 835 students and test for significant differences between three broad cultural groups (the largest cultural groups in South Africa), regarding the 15 sub-scales listed in Table 1. Thus, the focus was in particular on Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem. As a whole, the South African students were highly connected to the future, indicating future optimism and preparation, as also found by Steyn et al. (2010).

This contrasts with the South African study of Rawatlal and Petersen (2012) conducted in KwaZulu-Natal. The disparity may be explained by the high incidence of HIV infections in KwaZulu-Natal (Welz et al. 2007) where 41% of pregnant women attending public sector antenatal clinics were HIV infected. Hence, many of the households are child-headed and poor and this may account for the adolescents’ reported lack of connectedness to the future in that study.

In the microsystem of the adolescents’ lives, they were highly connected to religion, indicating religious identities and regular attendance of religious services. They were also well connected to “self-in-the-present”. This reveals that they viewed themselves as likable with unique and special characteristics. Since there is a link between religiosity and optimism (or lack of depression) according to Houlberg et al. (2011), religiosity may explain the connectedness to the future and the positive associations with family (Abar et al. 2009). Regarding family, the students were highly connected to their parents, in particular to their mothers. They thus revealed that they cared about their parents and their parents’ views and that they got along well. In their microsystems, the students indicated that they were well connected to their teachers, more than to their fathers. This is also dissimilar to the findings of Rawatlal and Petersen (2012) who reported low connectedness to teachers. Thus, the issue is unresolved. Finally, the adolescents revealed that they were interested in getting to know kids from other cultures which is a signif-

icant and valuable finding in the light of the country's apartheid history.

The fact that the students seemed disconnected from their neighbourhoods may be related to the anonymity that is characteristic of city life. In addition, African and Mixed descent students often attend schools that were previously reserved for Caucasian students and are far from where they stay. Regarding the relative disinterest of African students in reading, Machet (2002) has found that this is, among others, related to the physical appearance of books (for example, absence of illustrations) and the fact that most books for African adolescents are written in English which is their second or third language. Low connectedness to a romantic partner could be related to the fact that many of the students are in their early adolescence and still uninvolved with romantic partners. However, there was a great deal of variance among the students with regard to this issue.

When the connectedness of the three cultural groups in their respective ecological systems are compared it is interesting to note how the rank order of connectedness to people and other variables are similar – adolescents of all three cultural groups were most connected to religion, the future and their parents, and least connected to reading, their neighbourhoods and romantic partners. All the adolescents connected well to their teachers (particularly the Caucasian students) – more than to friends or peers. The students were also more connected to their mothers than to their siblings and thereafter to their fathers. This confirmed previous research results elsewhere (for example, Dwairy and Achoui 2009).

The hypothesis could be accepted with regard to the fact that significant differences were determined between the three cultural groups on some of the 15 subscales: Mixed descent students were significantly more than Caucasian students connected to kids from other cultures. This may be explained by the fact that historically speaking, they descend from the other two cultural groups and may therefore more easily identify with both groups. Caucasian students were significantly more than African students connected to people that included their friends, their mothers, their fathers, and their teachers. Caucasian students were also significantly more than African students connected to reading and to religion. The

last finding contrasts somewhat to that of Walker and Dixon (in Abar et al. 2009) that African-American adolescents tended to be more religious than European-American adolescents.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to explore the connectedness of 835 adolescents in a South African city and to test for significant differences between three cultural groups on 15 variables. Although the study is limited by the fact that no distinction is made between different ethnic clusters within the three cultural groups, the results are nonetheless revealing in many ways, some of which are quite encouraging. For example, on the first ecological level of intra personal connectedness, the results indicate that the adolescents of all three cultural groups showed a healthy level of connectedness to themselves and a future optimism. They also revealed strong religious identities which could facilitate psychological benefits (including optimism), as explained.

The results illustrated that in the school microsystem of connectedness to others, the adolescents were highly connected to their parents (especially to their mothers), and to their teachers. Students of mixed descent were significantly more connected to kids of other cultures than the other two cultural groups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results indicate that schools may need to put measures in place to improve adolescent connectedness to kids of other cultures. The lack of connection to reading of the African students also needs to be addressed.

Implications for future research emerged. More representative samples that distinguish between different ethnic and language groups are needed. To gain a better understanding of the results of this study, qualitative in-depth follow-up research is also required. Among others, this may shed light on some of the findings of this study, for example, the somewhat higher connectedness of the adolescents to their teachers than to their fathers. In addition, it may clarify disparities between this study and the other South African study referred to. Such insights could give greater direction to possible interventions that may enhance adolescent connectedness without compromising healthy autonomy.



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