

Challenges in Understanding “CONNECTEDNESS” as a Construct

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Main Challenges are Not:

- n Showing evidence of its value for child and adolescent health and development

or

- n Identifying theory that is supportive

Challenges Are:

- n I. Conceptualization: What is it?
- n II. Compatibility: How well does it reflect other relevant constructs?
- n III. Value added: How do we gain from measuring it?
- n IV. Application: How well does it lend itself to application?

Review Method

- n Citation search on Grotevant & Cooper, 1986
 - n Select 30 most relevant
- n Key word search: "connectedness and adolescents"
- n Search individual study reference lists
- n Contact known experts

I. Conceptualization

Main Point:

There is substantial complexity, inconsistency, and lack of clarity in the conceptualization of connectedness.

Degrees of Proximity to the Individual

- n To individuals (e.g., parent, friend)
- n To groups (e.g., family, peers)
- n To institutions (e.g., schools)
- n To society
- n To values (e.g., moral, spiritual)

As a Property of a System of Relations

- n Connectedness (mutuality): “demonstration of sensitivity to and respect of the beliefs, feeling, and ideas of others” (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986)
- n Connectedness (permeability): “responsiveness or openness of an individual to the ideas of others” (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).
- n “. . . Connectedness, describing close parent-adolescent relationships, characterized by mutual reciprocity, trust and dependency.” (Beyers et al., 2003)

As the Quality of a Relationship

- n "Parent-Child Connectedness is characterized by the quality of the emotional bond between parents (or those with a parenting role) and their children" (Lezin et al., 2004)

The Degree of 'Liking' an Environment

n "I like school . . ."

(Eisenberg et al., 2003)

As the Degree of Performance in an Institution

n “one item assessed the two grades students received most often”

(Eisenberg et al., 2003)

As a Feeling State

- n “sense of belonging and meaning”, “civic trust”,
“sense of place, respect, and belonging” (Durkheim, 1951;
Bellah et al., 1996; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Lerner, 1991) in (Whitlock, 2004)
- n “sense of community” (“I feel connected to this
neighborhood.” “I feel at home in this neighborhood.”
(Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002)
- n “community belongingness” (“degree of support,
friendships, activity, and safety”) (Chipuer et al., 2003)

A Mix of 'State' and (antecedent?) Behaviors

- n “. . . lasting bond between parent and child . . . all demonstrated in day-to-day interactions. . .” (Lezin et al., 2004)
- n “. . . connectedness between parents and their children . . . e.g., trust, intimacy, closeness, and exchange of positive affect.” but measured with specific behaviors: positive affect, receptiveness, negative affect, rejection. (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2002)
- n “. . . attachment bonds. . . caregivers who consistently recognize and respond appropriately to the child’s needs” (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002)
- n state of autonomous-relatedness” [Bowlby], but measured by behaviors (speeches exhibiting it) (Allen et al., 1994)

Tautology

- n “The mutual attachment, resilience, support, and optimism that seem to characterize high PCC seem to function in a similar way, giving both parents and children a day-to-day life relatively free of conflict and animosity, while buffering them from many kinds of adversity.” (Lezin et al., 2004)

I. Conceptualization

- n Summary Point:

- n Clarification needs to be made as to whether "connectedness" is a:

- n a property of relationship

- n an evaluation of the quality of a relationship

- n a set of behaviors reflecting or leading to a relationship type

II. Compatibility: How Well Does it Fit with Existing Work?

n Main Point:

Most conceptualizations of “connectedness” reflect two of three widely studied elements of socializing relationships.

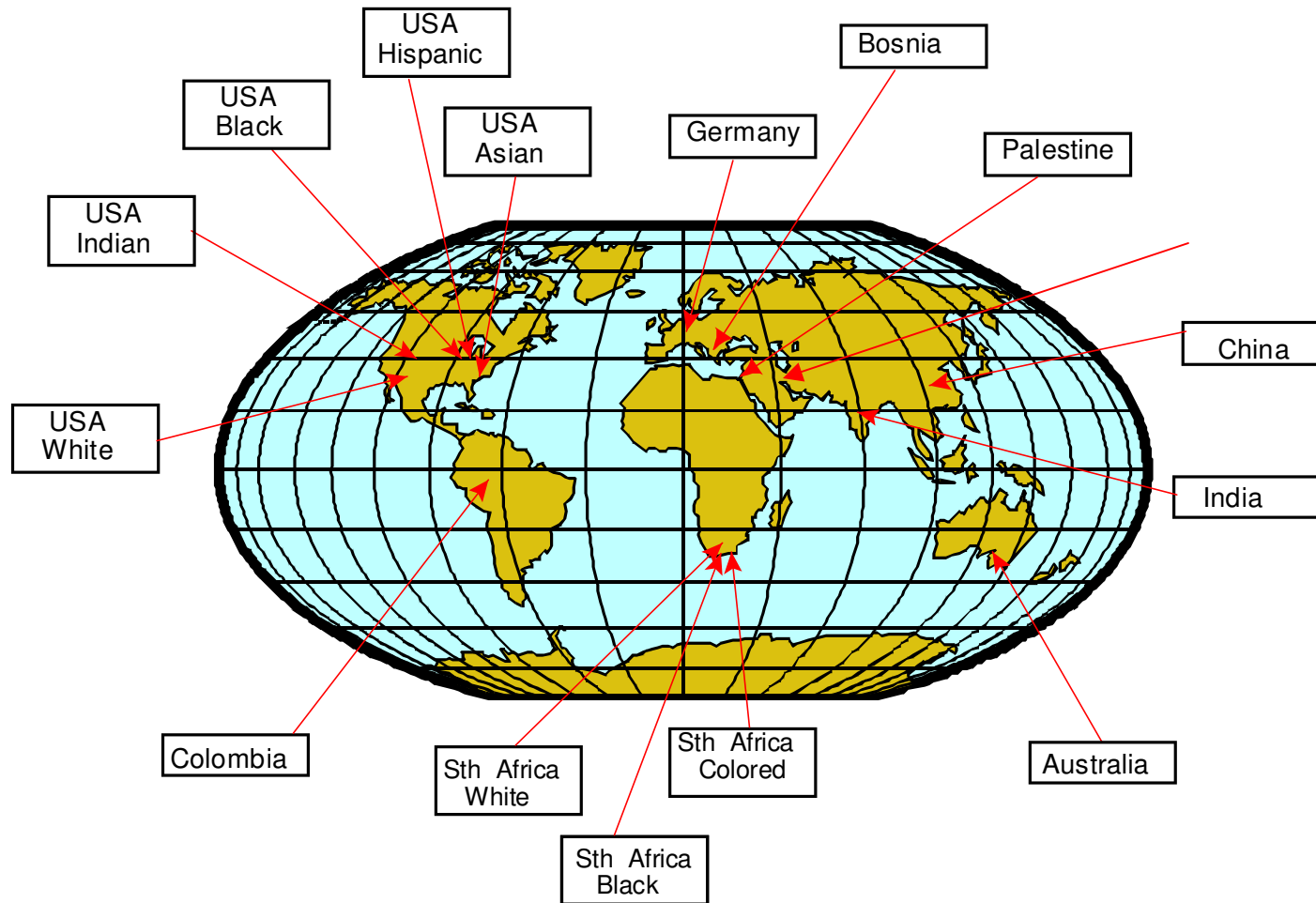
Behavioral Indicators or Antecedents

- n Present in most conceptualizations of “connectedness” are:
 - n Respect for individual, psychological autonomy (Allen et al., 1994; Barber, 2002; Grolnick, 2003)
 - n Positive, supportive relationship (relatedness, involvement, support) (Allen et al., 1994; Barber, 2002; Grolnick, 2003)

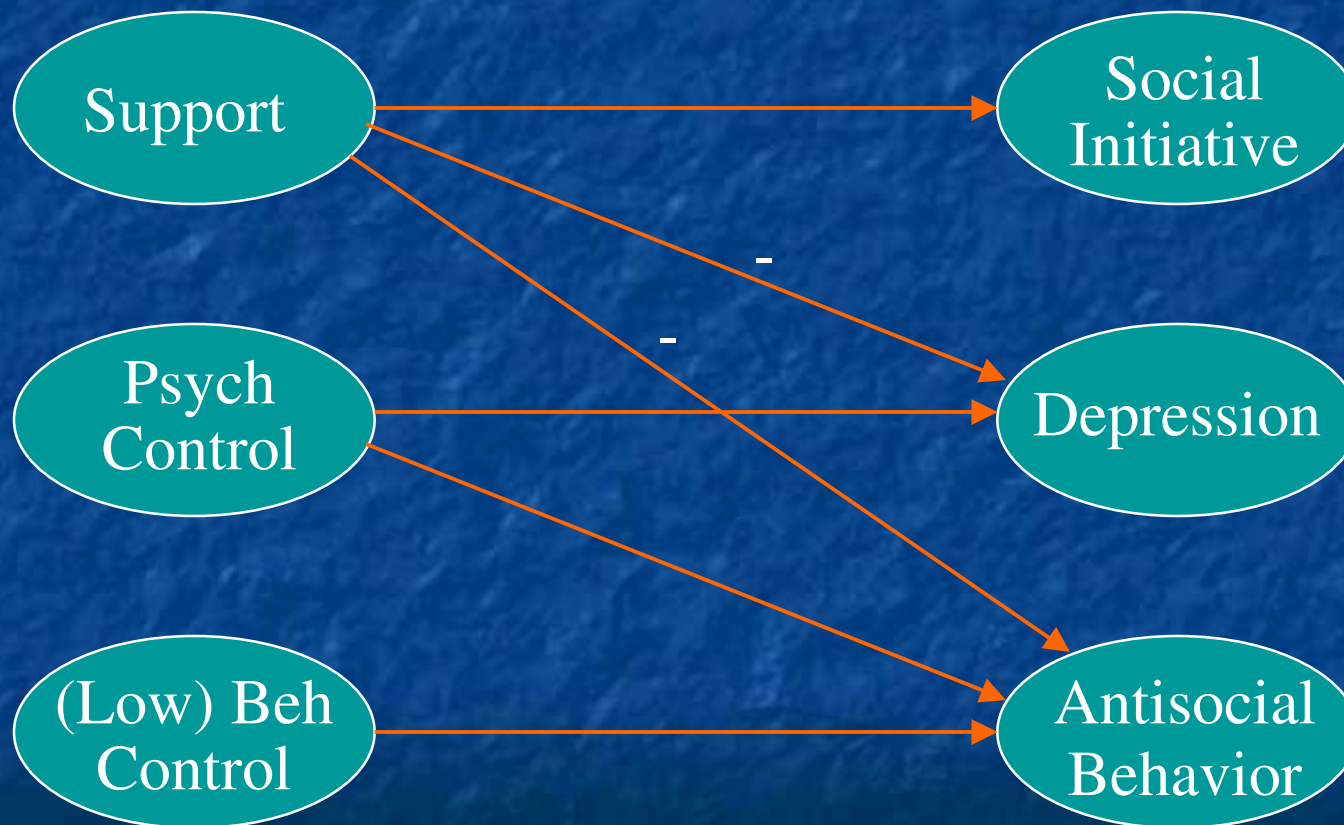
Behavioral Indicators or Antecedents

- n Absent in virtually all conceptualizations of “connectedness”:
- n Regulation (provision of structure to guide, monitor, and discipline behavior) (multiple references)

C-NAP Map



Summary of C-NAP Findings



Theoretical Levels

Support

CONNECTION

Behavioral Control

REGULATION

Psychological Control

RESPECT PSYCH
AUTONOMY

II. Compatibility: How Well Does it Fit with Existing Work?

n Summary Point:

- n To the extent that “connectedness” is intended to capture essential elements of facilitative social experiences (e.g., with parents, teachers, etc.), it needs to be broadened to include the regulatory realm.

III. Value Added

How does/could “connectedness” contribute to what is already known?

- n If “Connectedness” is conceptualized as a property of relationships (e.g., mutuality, permeability, secure attachment), then:
 - n How is knowing these properties different than assessing their behavioral components?

III. Value Added

How does/could “connectedness” contribute to what is already known?

- n If “Connectedness” is conceptualized as a state of feeling in a relationship or institution (e.g., trust, security, safety, belonging, etc.), then:
 - n How much of this feeling is not predicted by recognized, positive behaviors (support, resp. for autonomy, regulation)?
 - n What is accountable for the remaining portion?

III. Value Added

How does/could “connectedness” contribute to what is already known?

- n If “Connectedness” is conceptualized as socializing behaviors or conditions (e.g., support, resp. for autonomy, regulation), then:
 - n What is the value in aggregating them into a summary construct?

III. Value Added

How does/could “connectedness” contribute to what is already known?

- n Summary Point:

- n Depending on how “connectedness” is conceptualized, either more research is needed to understand its uniqueness from its antecedents, or focus should be placed on the specific salience of its components.

IV. Application: How Well does it Lend Itself to Application?

- n Assuming that “connectedness” is more than just the sum of its behavioral antecedents, and
- n Assuming that we could clearly define its uniqueness,
- n We are still faced with the inevitable challenge when trying to apply the construct:

IV. Application: How Well does it Lend Itself to Application?

- n We say to parents, teachers, clinicians, policy makers, etc., "To facilitate the healthy development of children, it is important to establish "connectedness" with them."
- n They ask, "How do I do that?"
- n The answer inevitably returns us to training for the behavioral antecedents.

IV. Application: How Well does it Lend Itself to Application?

- n Summary Point:

- n “Connectedness”, however defined, needs specification before it can be applied.

Overall Summary

- n Much room for clarification of the conceptualization
- n Some need to expand its coverage of the positive elements of socializing relationships
- n Not clear what the value added is of an umbrella construct
- n Needs specification for application

Connection

- n Positive, stable, emotionally close relationships with significant others
- n In the parent-child relationship, connection can be measured with variables like: communication quality, attachment, support, acceptance, etc.

Regulation

- n The provision of structure around *behavior.*
 - n Reasonable rules
 - n Regulations
 - n Supervision
 - n Monitoring, etc

Psychological Autonomy

- n Respecting psychological autonomy in the child by way not intruding, invalidating, or manipulating the identity or self of the child.
 - n Most typically measured by the presence of psychological control (e.g. invalidation of feelings, constraining verbal expression, excessive criticism, love withdrawal, guilt induction)