Connectedness and School Violence: A Framework for Developmental Interventions

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Biography:

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Adolescent connectedness significantly impacts violence in schools. The main goals of this chapter are to define the mechanisms by which promoting connectedness can prevent youth violence and to present a framework for constructing developmental intervention programs to prevent violence in schools. Developmental interventions provide myriad opportunities for school counselors and prevention programs to prevent violence in schools. Central to developmental interventions is the tenet that by helping youth establish a balance of connectedness to school, family, and friends, youth will become less likely to engage in violent behavior (Hawkins, Farrington, & Catalano, 1998; Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). Three principles from a framework for implementing developmental interventions are presented to highlight how connectedness-promoting interventions can fill a very important void in comprehensive violence prevention programming in the schools. To illustrate these principles, two developmental interventions are profiled at the end of the chapter.

The model of connectedness presented in this chapter is derived from ecological and developmental theory. It holds that each social world of the adolescent—school, friends, family and neighborhood—can be characterized along a continuum of conventionality. Highly conventional worlds include those contexts, relationships, and activities that are structured, sanctioned, and supervised by adults in society. These contexts of connectedness are antithetical to problem behaviors and risk taking (Donovan, Jessor, & Costa, 1988). Conventional connectedness usually includes the social worlds of school, teachers, reading, religion, and family, all of which are structured by adults and directed toward the future. Positive orientations towards and active involvement in all of these serve to buffer against violence (Honora & Rolle, 2002; O'Donnell, Hawkins, & Abbott, 1995). Connectedness to peers, friends, and the

neighborhood may be conventional if the nature of these relationships and activities reflect attitudes and conventions prescribed by adults. However, the neighborhood and time spent with peers, friends, and romantic partners, given their unsupervised nature, often elicit activities that can lead to problem behaviors. The unconventional worlds of connectedness are those social ecologies in which youth themselves typically dictate the norms, activities, and structure that govern what youth do. Youths' neighborhoods and friendships are the most common examples of contexts in which unconventional connectedness develops. All adolescents need to achieve a minimum amount of connectedness across their social ecology, but not all are able to establish sufficient connectedness within the family, school, and other conventional contexts and relationships. Youth at risk for engaging in violence often establish an imbalance, having more unconventional than conventional forms of connectedness.

Connectedness also varies developmentally and ecologically in ways that bear directly on violence in schools. This chapter provides definitions of connectedness, highlights its variations across contexts during adolescence, and illustrates the different effects of conventional and unconventional connectedness on violent and delinquent behavior in order to identify important parameters and practices for promoting connectedness in schools. These principles may be used to create interpersonally focused, developmental interventions to prevent and reduce violence in schools.

Connectedness: A Critical Target for Violence Prevention in Schools

Promoting connectedness to school serves to counterbalance the increasing importance of connectedness to peers and friends in adolescence. This counterbalance is important because connectedness to friends and peers who engage in unconventional, problem behaviors is one of the best predictors of violent behavior (Olin, 2001). Youth who engage with peers and friends in

unconventional, illicit behaviors and who denounce school and other conventional contexts and relationships are most prone to violence. In contrast, youth who are actively involved in, enjoy, and feel good at school are less likely to engage in violent behavior (Cernkovich & Giordana, 1992; Farrington, 1991; O'Donnell et al., 1995). For this reason, promoting active engagement in school and positive feelings about school (viz., connectedness to school) should be at least one of the primary targets of school-based violence prevention programs. Promoting connectedness to friends who engage in conventional, prosocial behaviors should be another.

Connectedness has several precursors, including attachment to caregivers, relatedness to others, and feelings of belongingness within social groups. Connectedness is a function of attachment, interpersonal social support, and group-level experiences of belonging because connectedness—active involvement and caring for others—is a reciprocation of the support and positive affect that other people, in specific places, have provided youths and that have supported the youths' self-esteem and skill development. These processes reveal opportunities and parameters for structuring programs and experiences in schools that can assuage violent behaviors.

Connectedness: Active Involvement and Persistent Caring in One's Social Ecology

The concept of connectedness has sometimes been restricted to participation or involvement in interpersonal relationships (Gilligan, 1991; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991), but this definition is needlessly restrictive and inconsistent with the public's broader use of the term. More broadly, connectedness includes the acts of giving back to, being involved with, and being affectively invested in other people, places, and activities. "Connectedness occurs when a person is actively involved with another person, object, group or environment, and that involvement promotes a sense of comfort, well-being, and anxiety-

reduction" (Hagerty, Lynch Sauer, Patusky, & Bouwsema, 1993, p. 293). For example, youth can be connected to school and to reading just as they may care for, enjoy, and be actively involved with a teacher, peer, friend or parent.

The ecology of adolescent connectedness includes all of the significant micro-, macro-, and mesosystems that adolescents experience in their day-to-day lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Microsystems include youths' important relationships in the home with parents and siblings, in the school with teachers and peers, and in the neighborhood with friends. The macrosystems of connectedness are the larger institutions in youths' lives such as the neighborhood, family, school, religion, and cultural group membership. The mesosystems are those processes of connection that link micro- and macrosystems. For example, one main mesosystem in schools is reading, which is an activity that links the youth to school, teachers, and friends. Adolescent connectedness generalizes from dyadic relationships (or microsystems) toward the activities and contexts associated with these contexts. Connectedness reflects an extension and reciprocation of basic attachment and bonding processes to the adolescents' widening social ecology. Like indicators of attachment, connectedness reflects proximity seeking and positive affect for people, places and activities in the adolescent's life.

Connectedness: The Reciprocation of Experiences of Belonging, Relatedness, and Attachment

Connectedness has, as its source, those positive relationships and experiences with others in which one experiences esteem and competence. Early in life, positive attachments with caregivers provide children with their initial sources of support, esteem, and praise (Ainsworth, 1989; Kohut, 1977). Later, other forms of social support enter the lives of youth, such as interpersonal relatedness (e.g., with siblings, teachers, peers, and friends) and experiences of

group belonging. Therefore, attachment and social support can be viewed as the initial sources

of relatedness and belonging, which youth reciprocate through connectedness.

Attachment. The presence of connectedness early in life takes the form of a strong

caregiver-child bond. It reflects the behavioral reciprocation of affective experiences

(Chodorow, 1978; Stern, 1985) by the child to the caregiver through proximity seeking and

positive affect. Like the toddler, the adolescent becomes connected in those worlds that provide

the adolescent the basic interpersonal ingredients of self-development—empathy, praise, and

attention within relationships in which they receive clear, consistent structure (Kohut, 1977;

Kohut & Elson, 1987). It is well known that toddlers who have healthy, secure attachments with

caregivers demonstrate positive affect and proximity seeking toward caregivers (Ainsworth,

1989). Similarly, adolescents report the most positive affect and demonstrate proximity seeking

toward those people—whether parents, siblings, peers, friends, or teachers—who have provided

them empathy, praise, and attention in a clear and consistent manner. It is out of these

relationship contexts that skills, talents, and interests (self-developments) develop, because youth

make the greatest efforts to demonstrate interpersonal competence with those supportive people

(Kohut, 1977).

Youth report and demonstrate greater connectedness in the worlds in which they have felt

praised (and thus competent), empathized with (and thus understood), and attended to as special

(and thus important)—whether in the school, home, neighborhood, or religious contexts. This is

key to intervention and may explain why these qualities have been found in the most effective

prevention programs (Schorr, 1988; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002). It

is arguable that no amount of skills training or heightened knowledge will effectively curb

violent behavior among youth if such interventions are devoid of positive interpersonal relationships in which youth can feel competent, understood, and important.

Social Support. It appears that both youths' past and present levels of social support will affect their receptivity to interpersonal interventions. There is evidence that early attachment experiences predict individuals' openness to receiving help and willingness to accept social support during adolescence. Mallinckrodt (1991) found that the quality of late adolescents' relationships with their families and with important non-family members were significant predictors of the quality of their therapeutic working alliance. He argued that "the ability to meaningfully connect with others is presumed to be a good indicator of their capacity to form productive working alliances" (p. 402). Therefore, adolescents' ability to benefit from social support appears to be constrained by the quality of their past experiences with other people, such that those who have received the least social support may be the hardest to reach. In fact, aggressive youth who tend to overestimate their social relatedness (and report excessively high self-esteem) can be the most difficult to reach through interventions (Prasad-Gaur, Hughes, & Cavell, 2001).

Relatedness. In a similar way, security in the caregiver-child relationship determines to some degree the interpersonal relatedness youth experience in later relationships with peers, friends, and teachers. Relatedness is the felt sense of closeness and of being valued by another individual. Hagerty et al. (1993) suggest that relatedness is a "functional, behavioral system rooted in early attachment behaviors and patterns" such that "affiliation or exploration are activated only after the attachment behavioral system" (p. 292). Breaks in relatedness, such as through forced separations or empathic lapses, undermine connectedness by lessening youths' willingness to invest time and energy in relationships with others (Richters & Martinez, 1993).

For example, Midgley, Feldlauffer and Eccles (1989) reported that students who moved from elementary classrooms where they experienced high teacher support to middle school classrooms in which they perceived less teacher support showed decreases in their interest in learning. In short, where relatedness is undermined, connectedness will lapse as well. Youth whose teachers do not provide consistent sources of empathy, praise, and attention and clear, consistent structure will become less involved in school and will become less inclined to seek out these ingredients of self-development in school and school-based relationships (van Aken & Asendorpf, 1997).

Belonging. When relatedness is experienced collectively from multiple people in a defined context, the result is the experience of belonging. Belonging becomes of paramount importance to adolescents. The need to belong is defined, not as the need to be the passive recipient of supportive relationships, but as the need for "frequent [positive and pleasing] interaction plus persistent caring" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hagerty et al. (1993) describe connectedness to others, as well as to organizations and their activities, as a reciprocation of experienced belonging and relatedness that has, directly or indirectly, as its source primary attachment relationships. How accepted and valued a youth feels by particular groups shapes how connected—involved and concerned—that youth will be with people and activities in those groups or organizations. One confirms or acknowledges the experience of belonging and being related by becoming connected through increased interaction and caring for other people and places (see Figure 1).

Defined from an ecological point of view, then, adolescent connectedness reflects a youth's volitional involvement in relationships, contexts, and activities which he or she finds positive, worthwhile, and important. It is the reciprocation of one's positive experiences of relatedness and belonging with others in particular places. Connectedness is a function of both

the social support presented to individuals as well as their openness to receiving that social

support and to feeling secure in those relationships and contexts.

Because connectedness reflects the presence of such profoundly important experiences, it

has been linked to physical health as well as to clinical disorders and risk-taking behaviors

(Bonny, Britto, Klostermann, Hornung, & Slap, 2000; Hendry & Reid, 2000; Resnick, Harris, &

Blum, 1993). Indeed, there is a long line of research on delinquency and violent behavior that

shows that connectedness and alienation are intimately linked with problem behaviors among

youth (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Hirschi, 1969; Jessor & Jessor, 1977), and therefore

are important targets of effective violence prevention programs (Allen, Kuperminc, Philliber, &

Herre, 1994; Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991; Jason & Kobayashi, 1995; Jessor, 1992).

Given these findings, promoting connectedness seems like a logical and worthwhile goal.

However, the protective functions of connectedness appear to vary across the relationships and

contexts in adolescents' lives, such that not all forms of connectedness decrease one's risk for

violent behavior.

Conventionality in Adolescent Connectedness

Jessor and Jessor's (1977) problem behavior theory argues that the concept of

conventionality plays a significant role in delinquency, risk-taking, and substance use, all of

which contribute to or co-occur with violence. Depending on the individual youth and the

specific set of peers, connectedness to peers can reflect either the conventions of the adult world

or the unsupervised activities and norms of the adolescent world. Associating with conventional

peers is one of the best protective factors against violent behavior (Hawkins et al., 1998;

Hawkins et al., 1991; Olin, 2001). Although connectedness to friends could be called

conventional because most families want their children to have friends, connectedness to friends serves a different function than does connectedness to school or to family.

Connectedness to friends has both positive and negative effects on violent behavior. On the one hand, any connectedness is better than none in terms of promoting social development, avoiding experiences of alienation, and preventing aggression (Collins, 2002; Nakkula & Selman, 1991). On the other hand, when connectedness to friends is high but there is little conventional connectedness to school or family, youths' risk for engaging in violence increases.

"Adolescents who describe positive relationships with parents and teachers show greater adaptation to school in terms of their academic coping, engagement, self-regulation, and perceived control. Relationships with friends are generally unrelated to these outcomes, suggesting the different functional significance of students' relationships during early adolescence. In addition, adolescents who strongly identify with parents and teachers show more positive school adjustment and motivation, whereas emulation of friends is negatively related to these variables." (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997, p. 83-84)

Spending unsupervised time in the neighborhood, with friends, and in other youth-governed contexts increases the risk that youth will engage in unconventional behaviors (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Patterson, Dishion, & Yoerger, 2000, Jessor, 1992). Taken to the extreme, unconventional connectedness leads to unconventional activities that are unlawful and potentially damaging to self and others (Jessor & Jessor, 1977). Behaviors, such as stealing, drinking, delinquency, and violence, are most common when strong connectedness to friends is not balanced by equally strong connectedness to school or to family (Hirschi, 1969; Olin, 2001), because conventional connectedness serves as a control against non-normative, antisocial, illicit and aggressive behaviors (Hirschi, 1969).

There appears to be an interaction between forms of conventional and unconventional connectedness, such that when connectedness is not achieved in one context it will be overemphasized in others (Ainsworth, 1989). Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that because the need to belong is pervasive, there is a "compensatory function" that allows the absence of belonging in one ecology (e.g., family) to be countered by belonging in another (e.g., friends). They argue that "relationships should substitute for each other, to some extent, as would be indicated by effective replacement of lost relationships partners and by a capacity for social relatedness in one sphere to overcome potential ill effects of social deprivation in another" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995. p. 500). Although the absence of conventional connectedness with one parent can be compensated for by connectedness with the other, unconventional connectedness, such as with friends, cannot take the place of absent parental connectedness (van Aken & Asendorpf, 1997). The intervention opportunity presented by this compensatory function is the possibility for conventional experiences and relationships, such as in after-school programs, to compensate for prior deprivations of conventional connectedness that resulted from poor parental bonding, peer rejection, or school failure and underachievement.

Yet often it appears that aggressive and alienated youth engender further disconnection from their conventional peers and teachers. In a study of rural, middle school adolescents, Karcher (2002) reported three findings that present challenges to successful intervention. First, parenting practices predicted violent behavior, and parenting interventions are often beyond the scope of many school violence programs (Cooper, Lutenbacher, & Faccia, 2000). Second, parenting practices contributed to connectedness to teachers, specifically poor parenting practices predicted lower levels of connectedness to teachers and to school. Third, controlling for the effects of parenting practices on teacher connectedness, there was a negative effect of

violent behavior on teacher connectedness. Youth who engaged in violent behavior became less connected to their teachers. This reveals the cycle of violence in which disconnection (i.e., from parents) leads to violence, which further decreases connectedness (e.g., to teachers). Therefore, teachers must actively work to break this cycle, knowing that violent teens may be predisposed to establish weak bonds with them (Prasad-Gaur et al., 2001).

Further analysis of data from this study of 139 rural, Caucasian middle school students (Karcher, 2002) reveals the interaction effect of conventional/unconventional connectedness and violent behavior. Correlations between connectedness and the frequency of violent behaviors were examined using a survey of the number of times a youth has engaged in particular types of adolescent violence (Kingery, 1998) and an ecological measure of adolescent connectedness (Karcher, 2001) which uses a five-point anchored scale. Friend, parent, and school connectedness correlated negatively with the frequency of several of the more severe forms of violence, like menacing language, impulsive violence, and inventive violence, but not with common forms of violence. For example, both connectedness to friends ($r = -.18$) and to parents ($r = -.20$) were negatively correlated with severe menacing behavior, such that more connectedness predicted less violence. And there was an interaction between connectedness to parents and to friends, such that only the youth who reported low connectedness to both friends and parents reported engaging in severe menacing behavior, $F(3, 132) = 7.06$, $p < 001$. The interaction in Figure 2 was computed by charting one standard deviation above and below the mean frequency of engaging in acts of severe menacing for both types of connectedness. The interaction was computed, such that the rate of severe menacing $= 4.108 - 1.501(b_{parents}) - .874$ $(b_{friends}) + .352 (b_{parents} \times b_{friends})$. The interaction reveals that severe menacing violent behavior is most likely when there is no connectedness to friends to compensate for absent

connectedness to parents. This provides one more reason why promoting connectedness among disconnected youth should be a primary goal of comprehensive violence prevention programs in schools.

Developmental Trends in Connectedness to Friends, School, and Family

Unfortunately, in terms of violence prevention, it is normative for unconventional connectedness, such as to peers and friends, to increase during adolescence and for conventional connectedness to decline. Lynch & Cicchetti (1997) illustrated that between elementary and middle school, a shift occurs in children's connection to family and teachers (it wanes) as the strength of their connection to friends and peers increases. Lynch and Cicchetti revealed that "a higher percentage of elementary-school children report having secure patterns of relatedness with adult partners (70.9% with their mothers and 57.4% with their teachers) than do middle-school children (65.2% and 27.1% with mothers and teachers respectively). Of particular note is the finding that middle-school children are more likely than elementary-school children to have a *disengaged* pattern of relatedness with their teachers…. Conversely, middle-school children are more likely to report having secure patterns of relatedness with peers (83.9% with their best friends and 65.4% with their classmates) than are elementary-school children (70.3% and 53.7% with best friends and classmates respectively)"(p. 91-92). This explanation supports psychoanalytic (Blos, 1962) descriptions of adolescence as a time of separation from the family and of extending early attachments to the peer group.

Lynch and Cicchetti's explanation is ecological but somewhat incomplete. They argue that context changes cause these changes in connectedness:

"As children grow older, they increasingly begin to function in contexts that extend

beyond the home and family. The school setting is the major extrafamilial environment

in which children operate, beginning in early childhood and extending through

adolescence. In school, children are exposed to a new community of unfamiliar peers

and adults, and they are presented with a new set of context specific challenges. In

particular, integration into the peer group, acceptable performance in the classroom, and

appropriate motivational orientation for achievement are all part of this stage-salient

developmental task." (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997, p. 81)

This explanation is partly true, but it does not fully explain why youth disengage from teachers

but not from peers.

The Role of Perspective Taking in Connectedness Development

Another explanation for these developmental patterns can be found in changes in the

primary sources of self-esteem and in cognitive development between pre-adolescence and

adolescence. Theorists of self-development, from Mead (1934) to Harter (1999), suggest that it

is from close interpersonal relationships that empathy, praise, and attention are drawn that

provide the basis for self-esteem and self-development (Kohut, 1977; Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

Youths' primary sources of esteem, however, begin to shift during pre-adolescence. For the pre-

adolescent, primary sources of social support are parents and teachers, but for older adolescents

friends and peers become increasingly important sources of social support. There appear to be

several reasons for this, one of which is the task of self-development and another is the growth of

perspective-taking abilities during this time.

Erik Erikson (1968) described the processes of identity development in considerable

detail and expanded his earlier (1959) description of the stages of what can be called self-

developments. These stages reflect developmentally specific self-developments. Kohut and

Wolf (1978) argue that self-developments (skills, talents, and self esteem) result from empathy,

praise, and attention in the context of clear, consistent structure provided by competent adults. Erikson's developmental model illustrates that each stage of development (e.g., the establishment of trust in the parent-child relationship) contributes to later identity developments (i.e., like autonomy and initiative). For Erikson, self-developments are the manifestation of youths' cognitive differentiation and integration of their own skills, roles, and self-awareness in the larger social contexts and social groups in their lives. That is, self-developments result from seeing oneself in relationship to others in increasingly complex ways.

Unfortunately, in Erikson's developmental model not all of the self-developments are couched within the connectedness developments that implicitly precede and inform them. The importance of connectedness appears to be relegated to the developmental periods before childhood and at the end of adolescence. After trust (or mistrust) is established in the infant and toddler eras, the next three developmental achievements are related to autonomy, separateness, and distinctiveness as manifested through (1) initiative, (2) industry, and (3) identity achievements (see Figure 3). The next developmental achievement connectedness in Erik Erikson's model, intimacy, appears only after the development of identity in late adolescence. Not presented in Erikson's taxonomy is the role of connectedness developments in each successive self-development.

Joan Erikson (1988) wrote about the weaving tension of developmental growth as a process of tacking back and forth between connectedness and self-developments. What links growth in connectedness and self-development is the phenomenon of social cognitive development (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). Each of Erik Erikson's "I" developments (Initiative, Industry, and Identity) reflects an increasingly differentiated social perspective taken on the self in the context of others. Therefore, each "I" self-development grows out of a

developmentally distinct form of connectedness, and each subsequent form of connectedness reflects youths' abilities to take the perspective of others and use it for self-understanding.

Understanding the connection between self-developments, connectedness developments, and perspective-taking abilities is important for the prevention of violence in two ways. First, violence, both physical and verbal, reflects the dominance of one's own needs and wants over another's. Violence is, therefore, evidence of limited perspective taking (Selman et al., 1992). This may be due either to an unwillingness or an inability to consider and respect others' points of view. For example, it is commonly agreed that increases in empathy result in decreases in aggression and violence (Chandler, 1973; van Manen & Emmelkamp, 2001); and that gains in empathy require mature social perspective taking (Eisenberg, 1992; Eisenberg et al., 1996). Second, neither the promotion of skills nor of connectedness will be possible without understanding the constraints that cognitive development places on successful intervention because attachment-based working models are understood by the individual differently at each successive level of cognitive development (Fischer & Ayoub, 1996). Interventionists should understand the manner in which perspective taking develops and contributes to both connectedness and self-developments.

Four levels of perspective taking develop between childhood and late adolescence (Selman, 1980), and each differently shapes the way in which connectedness and self-developments occur. The *egocentric point of view* (level 0) is revealed through behavioral indicators of one's transitory needs, wants, feelings. Impulsive violence is one indicator of egocentric (level 0) perspective taking in action (Selman, et al., 1992). *Subjective perspective taking* (level I) reflects a spoken point of view that can be explained and justified but does not realistically consider others' needs. *Reciprocal perspective taking* (level II) reflects the ability to

coordinate others' wants, needs, and feelings (i.e., points of view) with one's own in terms of making decisions, planning, and feeling empathic. This is a critical development in terms of violence prevention, because it allows for empathy and cooperation (Tice & Baumeister, 1993). Finally, *shared perspective taking* (level III) allows a youth to step back and see him- or herself in important relationships from a 3rd person point of view. This perspective helps the youth see the impact of his or her actions on enduring relationships. It also helps youth to understand better that sometimes what an individual wants must become subordinate to the relationship's perspective if the relationship is to survive and thrive, or if one is to avoid being the target of reciprocated violence and hostility from others in the future.

Adolescent Connectedness

Each advance in perspective taking evokes new self-understanding and developments, both of which allow for new forms of connectedness to develop between youth and those people and places in their lives. In addition to the shift in emphasis in childhood from connectedness to adults to an emphasis on connectedness to peers and to friends in adolescence, the emergence of abstract (level III) perspective taking elicits heightened attention by youth to connectedness to groups, youth values, and abstract ideas. Adolescent connectedness reflects not only affection for and activity with significant people (parents, siblings, teachers, and peers) in the important social systems (school, family, neighborhood) that youth participate in regularly, but also reflects attention to the larger, principle-based ecologies (religion, culture, and future) that inform identity development. Pre-adolescent connectedness is less differentiated. It is more dyad-specific, interpersonal, and reflects affection for and activity with those individuals (parents, siblings, teachers, friends and peers) in the important social worlds (school, family, and neighborhood) where youth negotiate their immediate needs in the contexts of others. Pre-adolescent

connectedness reveals youths' interest in pleasing and getting along with individual peers or adults, whereas mature adolescent connectedness reflects a desire to develop group-based identities and to maintain satisfying relationships. Successful intervention requires understanding the constraints cognitive development places on the manifestations of connectedness, as well as understanding the self-developments to which connectedness leads.

The Interactive Nature of Connectedness, Perspective Taking, and Self-Developments.

It appears from attachment studies that safe exploration and self-differentiation depends on the establishment of a secure bond with caregivers (Ainsworth, 1989; Bretherton, 1999). It is out of this secure place that the child's egocentrism is overcome through the discovery of his or her own interests and joy in exploring and playing. The child who experiences a positive parent-child bond uses this social support as a springboard for developing the initiative to explore his or her own interests, play activities, and the larger world beyond the parent-child relationship (Tolman, Diekmann, & McCartney, 1989). The child's autonomy and initiative, the first of Erikson's self-developments, helps the child to develop, define, and articulate his or her own perspective—to be able to articulate what he or she likes, enjoys, and wants (see Figure 3).

The child's initiative and subjective perspective taking help him or her to elicit further empathy, praise, and attention from parents and teachers. Through the same connectedness ➡ perspective taking ➡ self-development sequence, pre-adolescent connectedness results from parents and teachers valuing, praising, and encouraging the child's initiative. The pre-adolescent uses this connectedness to teachers and to parents as a secure base from which to develop academic and social skills. One primary mechanism by which these skills develop is as a function of taking the perspective of their teachers and parents. When the child's perspective-taking developments allow him or her to understand what teachers and parents want—i.e., what

activities result in positive reinforcement, praise, and attention—the child becomes more likely to practice those skills and activities. Acting industriously in ways that garner praise and approval from adults becomes the youth's main goal, because the goals and beliefs of adults are seen as correct forms of behavior to emulate so that one can receive their social support (Kohut, 1977).

By middle school, adolescent connectedness is derived from youth linking their own industriousness to that of their peers. Socially competent middle school students are consistently praised by parents and teachers for developing positive attitudes, as well as for demonstrating social and academic skills. Simultaneously, the ability to coordinate two social perspectives also allows youth to consider their peers' points of view. Youth begin to experience relatedness with other youth who share similar interests, skills, and attitudes. Often youths' unique interests are validated by their peers and friends in ways that parents cannot. Youth experience this form of relatedness in dyads, cliques, and chumships (Sullivan, 1953). Youth sharing similar perspectives become increasingly significant sources of relatedness and begin to compete with adults as primary sources of empathy, praise, and attention.

By early high school, youths' 3rd person or shared perspective-taking abilities help them to see that these cliques and dyads reflect interests, values, and activities that are shared by members of groups—like teams, clubs, and gangs. Youth, like adults, become drawn to those groups whose members share their own points of view. As occurred during middle school through dyads and chumships, in high school youth come to receive praise and attention from peer and social groups that they feel they cannot access from most adults. This praise and attention leads youth to become more involved in and to highly value these peer groups. This connectedness to peer groups becomes the centerpiece of most youths' evolving identity.

The identity youth create will reflect the balance of the conventional and unconventional connectedness in their lives. Youths' identities are born out of relationships in which they feel valued. Youth who identify with others who value school and who work hard tend to maintain their connectedness to school, parents, teachers and conventionally oriented peers during adolescence. But, youth who identify only with friends who discourage their connectedness to school, teachers, and parents are a greater risk for engaging in violence and risk taking.

<center>Disconnection and Violence</center>

Some changes in connectedness are a normal part of development. The normative and predictable changes in connectedness between childhood and adolescence described above provide targets for interventions designed to prevent violence by promoting connectedness. It is important to keep in mind, however, that disconnection also can result from unsatisfactory relationships with adults and poor performance in conventional contexts or activities (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994). Adolescents will tend to report lower than normal connectedness in those contexts and relationships in which they have experienced misunderstanding, criticism, and rejection. For example, school disconnection is typically a function of past experiences of underachievement in school and subsequent experiences of misunderstanding, criticism, and rejection. Similarly, family neglect, peer rejection, religious intolerance, and racial/ethnic misunderstandings experienced by youth may result in lower connectedness in the forms of less involvement, less positive affect, and less caring about their performance in those social worlds.

Hirschi (1969) argued that youth who are not able to get their affective needs for closeness and social bonding met within the conventional worlds of the school or the family are left to get those needs met from other youth. Not feeling liked and supported by adults in their

schools or families, such youth discount the importance of those social ecologies. Finding a

cohort of peers who also share their anti-conventional outlook leads alienated youth to engage in

unconventional and sometimes unlawful activities. These activities and their unconventional

connectedness to friends become their primary sources of self-esteem and markers of self-

development, and serve as primary triggers for youth violence (Olin, 2001).

Sometimes youths' disconnection from school and heightened connectedness to friends is

a function of the parenting styles youth experience at home (Karcher, 2002). The important role

of parental connectedness in the development of adolescents' connectedness to friends reveals

the indirect effect of poor parenting on youth violence. Parental contributions to youths' self-

esteem and self-development are mediated (or manifest) through youths' connectedness to

friends, because parents influence the kind of friends their children seek out (Brown, Mounts,

Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993). Youth who experience harsh and inconsistent parenting tend to

feel disconnected from their families and then associate with delinquent peers.

<div align="center">Interventions: What to Do?</div>

Although connectedness contributes to self-developments, specifically identity

development, skills development, and self-esteem, the question of how to prevent violence is not

as simple as promoting connectedness to school and family for all youth. Prevention programs

that overemphasize promoting connectedness for youth who require skill-building interventions

can be futile or problematic. However, it is difficult to teach academic skills to aggressive and

delinquent youth who have not already established a positive connection with program or school

staff. Barkely (1990) noticed this problem when first implementing his behavioral approach for

the treatment of ADHD. He found that unless the connection between the parent and child was

reestablished through activities that provided the children empathy, praise, and attention, children often would refuse to participate in any system of behavior modification.

Indeed the tension regarding whether schools should intervene to affect attitudes and behavioral patterns (i.e., promote conventional connectedness) or teach interpersonal skills, like cooperation and negotiation, remains unanswered. With regard to the targets of intervention, Harter (1999) casts the question in terms of self-esteem and asks,

"…should one identify the self-evaluations themselves as the target, for example, by attempting to enhance global self-worth directly, or should one focus primarily on improving actual skills in particular domains? The goals of these different educational programs reflect two competing orientations toward change. As Caslyn and Kenny (1997) have noted, 'self-enhancement' theorists believe that efforts should focus on enhancing self-concept and self-esteem directly. In contrast, 'skills' theorists argue that attitudes about the self are consequences of successful achievement and thus pedagogical efforts should be directed toward enhancing specific academic skills. In recent years, the pendulum has clearly shifted toward the skills learning orientation in which interventions target specific domains." (p. 311)

In the end, Harter suggests that specific skills and experiences be the focus of intervention with enhanced self-esteem a distal outcome or goal of the program. The rationale for this argument is that improved skills, such as in negotiation or academics, will result in improvements in self-esteem. However, absent from this debate is the importance of youths' connectedness to teachers and program staff. Self-evaluations often reflect how we think we are seen by others (Mead, 1934), which requires the ability to understand others' perspectives (Selman, 1980).

Therefore, improved skills in contexts and relationships devoid of connectedness are not likely to affect self-esteem because meaningful experiences of empathy, praise, and attention are lacking.

The model of adolescent connectedness presented in this chapter suggests that there is a weaving back and forth between self-developments (both in self-esteem and in skills) and connectedness developments during adolescence. Following each growth in connectedness are particular sets of self-developments, part of which reflect youths' estimations of how they are viewed by others and their desire to attain the skills that will be appreciated by those in their lives whom they value. Therefore, the target of a developmental intervention designed to prevent violence will depend on the adolescent's relative achievements of connectedness, perspective taking, and self-development.

Developmental Interventions for the Prevention of Youth Violence

From the model in Figure 3, three principles of youth development can be hypothesized to provide guidelines for intervention and the prevention of youth violence.

Central Principles of Developmental Interventions

1. Connectedness and self-developments are mutually dependent. (a) Age appropriate forms of connectedness are a result of perspective-taking skill development, prior self-developments, and earlier experiences of connectedness. To promote connectedness, interventions should build on prior self-developments and help children take a perspective on both their own and others' interests, experiences, and talents. (b) Growth in self-developments is a function of perspective-taking skill developments, prior connectedness, and prior achievements in self-development. To facilitate self-developments, interventions must target the use of perspective-taking skills within significant relationships.

For example, once pre-adolescent connectedness is established self-developments emerge through the process of perspective taking. By identifying their own skills (both social and academic) youth come to better understand their subjective perspective and uniqueness, which informs self-esteem, but also allows them to understand how they are like and dislike others. Coordinated or reciprocal perspective taking (level II) is a prerequisite for comparing and contrasting one's own attitudes, interests, skills, and experiences with those of others. This reflection on self-developments leads youth to participate in activities with like-minded peers, which facilitates belonging, and results in group-based adolescent connectedness.

2. *Successful intervention requires developmental assessments and goal setting*. Successful intervention will depend, in part, on the accuracy of adults' assessments of youths' relative strengths and deficits in the areas of connectedness, perspective taking, and self-development. Interventions should target areas of deficits, either connectedness, perspective taking, or self-development, by promoting the precursors of each development.

Although a good assessment of strengths and weaknesses in these three areas is critical to establishing targets for intervention, it is not as important that youth achieve some criterion level of each through the intervention, but rather that they participate in and enjoy the process. Certainly connectedness, perspective taking, both social and academic skills, and self-esteem can be measured, quantified, and subjected to specific evaluative criteria. However, the model in Figure 3 is intended to convey these as interrelated experiences more than as specific, independent achievements. The goal of each intervention should be to help youth to experience, practice, and engage in the process of being connected, taking others' perspectives, esteeming oneself, and learning skills.

3. Development occurs within ongoing relationships. Developmental interventions should occur within authentic, ongoing relationships between youth and their peers. These peer interactions should be structured with activities that promote specific developments in connectedness, perspective taking, or domains of the self (e.g., skills or self-esteem). Adults should work to ensure that the unconventional activities, attitudes, and behaviors do not develop as a result of the intervention (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999).

The main mechanisms of growth in all three areas are the two related experiences of (a) empathy, praise, and attention, and (b) clear, consistent structure from competent others. Kohut (1977) suggests that empathy, praise, and attention evoke self-esteeming and establish connectedness with significant others. When those significant others act in a clear, consistent, and competent fashion, this leads youth to idealize and want to model the behaviors of those others (whether adults or peers). Youth want to act in ways that will continue to evoke empathy, praise, and attention from others, and so they seek out specific skills and talents. When talents and skills are achieved, youth see that others are pleased by these self-developments, and connectedness results in the form of the youth liking and wanting to be around those people. These esteeming, praising, and attending processes must be included along with skill learning opportunities in interventions that are designed to strengthen conventional connectedness.

Age and Context Specific Developmental Interventions

The model in Figure 3 and the principles above reveal age specific opportunities for violence prevention. At each age, specific forms of connectedness, perspective taking, and self-developments are required. Deficits in any area increase youths' risk for engaging in or being the target of violent behavior. Youth are more likely to engage in violent behavior if they lack empathy, feel alienated and disconnected, or suffer the consequences of deficits in skill

development (van Manen & Emmelkamp, 2001). Successful intervention requires accurate assessment of the presence of each skill and deficit, and the targeted use of structured peer-based interventions, preferably in the conventional context of school.

Developmental interventions in preschool and early elementary school could promote initiative in the form of motivating children to explore their environment, engage in parallel peer play, and pursue the activities that interest them. However, children might not be ready for this self-development if early care-taking experiences did not facilitate strong caregiver-child bonding. In the absence of a secure attachment to primary caregivers, promoting adult-child bonding should be the target of intervention. Interventions and relationship contexts could be structured so that caregivers can provide (a) empathy, praise, and attention and (b) clear, consistent structure. These adults would need sufficient training and supervision to ensure they feel competent in providing such experiences. Once caregiver bonding is strengthened through interventions like parent training or quality daycare, children could be provided environments that engage the child's interest, activity, and exploration and thereby promote the child's initiative and motivation.

As illustrated in the framework in Figure 3, the goals of developmental interventions in elementary school should be to solidify the child's initiative and motivation, facilitate the child's awareness of his or her own unique perspective, and use both of these experiences to encourage pre-adolescent connectedness. Pre-adolescent connectedness is important because it supports the development of social (e.g., negotiation) skills, academic skills, and self-esteem in late elementary school and middle school. Pre-adolescent connectedness is demonstrated through the child's active engagement and positive attitudes towards school, the family, and dyadic relationships with teachers, peers, friends, parents, and siblings.

Developmental interventions in late elementary and middle school should encourage engagement in peer relationships and contexts that (a) facilitate the acquisition of social and academic skills, and (b) provide opportunities for self-reflection, social comparison, and cooperation. Intervention examples include pair counseling and developmental mentoring. Both of these two developmental interventions, described in greater detail in the next section, promote social skills, connectedness, and perspective taking as well as negotiation skills in the context of structured and supervised peer relationships. Positive experiences by children in interventions such as these that promote pre-adolescent connectedness and perspective taking should effect self-developments in social skills, academic skills, and self-esteem that prevent violence.

For youth in early middle school who have firmly established social skills, academic skills, and self-esteem, but who demonstrate negative school attitudes or weakening bonds to conventional contexts and people (e.g., family and school) the goal of developmental interventions should be to promote adolescent connectedness to teachers, peers, parents, and conventional activities (like reading), to promote the student's vision of him- or herself in the future, and to facilitate participation in pro-social, conventional group activities (e.g., sports, band, clubs, volunteerism) that can promote conventional forms of connectedness. Interventions should provide opportunities to coordinate skills around shared goals within teams and groups (e.g., sports, clubs) in order to (a) promote the application of self-developments (e.g., social skills, school achievement, and self-esteem) within conventional relationships and to (b) facilitate shared, 3rd-person perspective taking. Both of these should strengthen adolescents' connectedness and lessen youths' risk for and engagement in violence at school.

By late middle school and early high school a central goal of developmental interventions should be to facilitate conventional identity development through deepened involvement in

conventional activities and relationships. Erikson (1968) forewarned of processes by which an overemphasis on unconventional connectedness can lead to a negative identity. Both conventional and unconventional adolescent connectedness affect identity development, self-esteem, risk-taking, academic success and interpersonal happiness (Bonny et al., 2000; Bush, 2000; Grotevant & Cooper, 1998; Hendry & Reid, 2000; Resnick et al., 1997). And the effect of adolescent connectedness on identity development is mediated by perspective-taking skills (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Selman, 1977, 1981). As one example, seeing oneself as a member of this or that group helps solidify the youth's identity. Yet, the precursors to identity must be in place for identity-development interventions to be effective. For example, a balance of unconventional and conventional forms of connectedness should already be established and secure in youths' lives. Interventions should provide opportunities to reflect on experiences with peer groups in contexts of conventional connectedness that confirm these as important parts of youths' self-understanding. For example, by mentoring a younger child or volunteering time in a school or community, older youth can receive positive, conventionally based empathy, praise, and attention, which helps to confirm a degree of conventionality in their developing identities. Similarly, school-based interventions and school-to-work programs can promote both connectedness and self-developments. Most effective will be those interventions that promote (a) principle-driven social involvement, (b) coordinated, supervised activities for a social cause which promote shared (3rd person) conventional perspective taking, or (c) structured and collaborative team, club, or civic involvement. Each of these activities should facilitate gains in identity development (assuming the experiences are positive) and further integrate the use of level three, shared perspective taking into the everyday lives of adolescents.

Ideally, these interventions would be part of a system of intervention activities that span across adolescents' ecology and developmental periods. Many school developmental guidance programs have such coordinated and sustained interventions as their ultimate goal (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). In the prevention of violence, it seems that enduring activities that are well integrated into the school, community, or family organizations have the greatest impact (Dryfoos, 1990; Embry, Flannery, Vazsonyi, Powell, & Atha, 1996; Larson, 1994; Schorr, 1988). For this reason, the following section describes two interventions that target youth in primary and secondary school contexts and that provide ongoing, developmentally appropriate opportunities for growth in perspective taking, connectedness, and self-development.

Two Developmental Interventions: Dyadic Approaches to Violence Prevention

Two intervention approaches that are designed to promote all three developmental intervention targets—connectedness, perspective taking, and self-developments—are developmental mentoring and pair counseling. Both occur within ongoing relationships with peers and have been found effective in reducing or preventing violent, aggressive, and delinquent behavior (Karcher & Lewis, 2002; Selman et al., 1992; Sheehan, DiCara, LeBailly, & Christoffel, 1999). They are most commonly used with older children and young adolescents who demonstrate delayed development in skills, connectedness, or perspective taking, and who are, therefore, at increased risk for violent behavior (Dodge & Frame, 1982; Selman et al., 1992). In both interventions, peer relationships are structured by adults in order to facilitate connectedness to others and to school, to encourage age-appropriate perspective taking within these relationships, and to help youth learn academic and social skills.

Developmental Intervention Example One: Developmental Mentoring

In developmental mentoring, children (as mentees) are paired with high school mentors. This is a form of cross-age, peer group, structured mentoring that typically takes place after school (Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002). Initially, the mentee uses developmental mentoring either to establish pre-adolescent connectedness within the ecology of the school, or to develop social skills, academic achievement, and self-esteem. Some youth need to capitalize on their prior skill developments to achieve connectedness, while others need to build on their already established connectedness to develop new skills, interests, and self-understandings. Program coordinators help the adolescent mentor decide whether to focus on (a) providing mentees empathy, praise, and attention, or on helping (b) the children develop skills by modeling and guiding age-appropriate academic and social skills in a playful, peer group context.

Developmental mentoring provides an opportunity for youth to participate in the program across their elementary, middle, and high school years by providing different roles in the program. Children in middle school who have grown beyond their role as mentee can become protégés who serves as an assistant to one or more mentors. Being a protégé allows youth to draw on their previously developed social skills, school achievement experiences, and own positive memories in the program to help another mentor and mentee dyad. Ideally, the protégé makes repeated efforts to take other youths' points of view (both the mentors' and mentees') to assist them with their relationship. This serves to increase the protégés' empathy for others by practicing taking others' (3rd person) perspectives. For teenagers, serving as a mentor allows them to try and recreate their own experiences of conventional connectedness with others and to more fully develop the conventional aspects of their identities through making this time commitment to volunteering. By promoting empathy and by facilitating involvement in

conventional relationships, activities, and contexts, both protégés and mentors should become less likely to engage in or instigate violent behaviors.

Developmental Intervention Example Two: Pair Counseling

Pair counseling is a dyadic form of play therapy designed to help children utilize social perspective-taking skills within real relationships (Selman & Schultz, 1990). It requires the counselor to accurately assess which type of perspective taking development is needed by the children, and whether each child needs help developing connectedness or developing skills. One child might negotiate through aggression and simply need help learning how to articulate his or her own perspective (level I). Another child might need help listening to and working with others' points of view (level II). This assessment of perspective taking helps determine the goals of the pair counseling.

In pair counseling, two children play under the watchful supervision of a counselor. The counselor works to promote empathy, praise, and attention within the pair; model competent negotiation skills; and provide opportunities for the children to practice these social skills. The counselor helps the children negotiate conflicts when they arise (e.g., manage their separateness), and helps the children understand how their actions affect their relationship (i.e., their connectedness).

Whether the counselor focuses on connectedness or self-developments depends on the children and the relationship. The child who knows what to do, has the skills to be successful, but typically doesn't use the skills, can be helped to take the perspective of the other child and to understand the impact of his or her immature behaviors on their friendship (Nakkula & Selman, 1991). Conversely, the child who understands the power of friendship and desires connectedness, but who does not have the skills to get his or her own needs met within the

relationship, can be taught social skills and assertiveness as alternatives to aggression and violence and given opportunities to practice these skills in an ongoing, supervised peer relationship.

Conclusion

Promoting connectedness in the lives of adolescents is critical to violence prevention in many ways. Beyond the role of alienation and disconnection as precursors to violence, promoting connectedness also is key to successful violence prevention. Lasting gains in skills and self-esteem, and interest in conventional relationships and activities as a result of intervention may first require interventionists to reestablish youths' connectedness to teachers, school, the family, and other conventional people and places. Once re-established, connectedness can serve as a foundation for youth to use their burgeoning perspective-taking skills to develop new social and academic skills, and thereby to strengthen their self-esteem. Thus, connectedness is critical to violence prevention not solely through its direct effect on violence, but also through its indirect effects. One indirect effect is that promoting connectedness to adults and peers in a prevention program increases the likelihood that youth will be receptive to establishing conventional relationships and engaging in the conventional prevention activities that are believed to directly reduce youths' propensity toward violence.
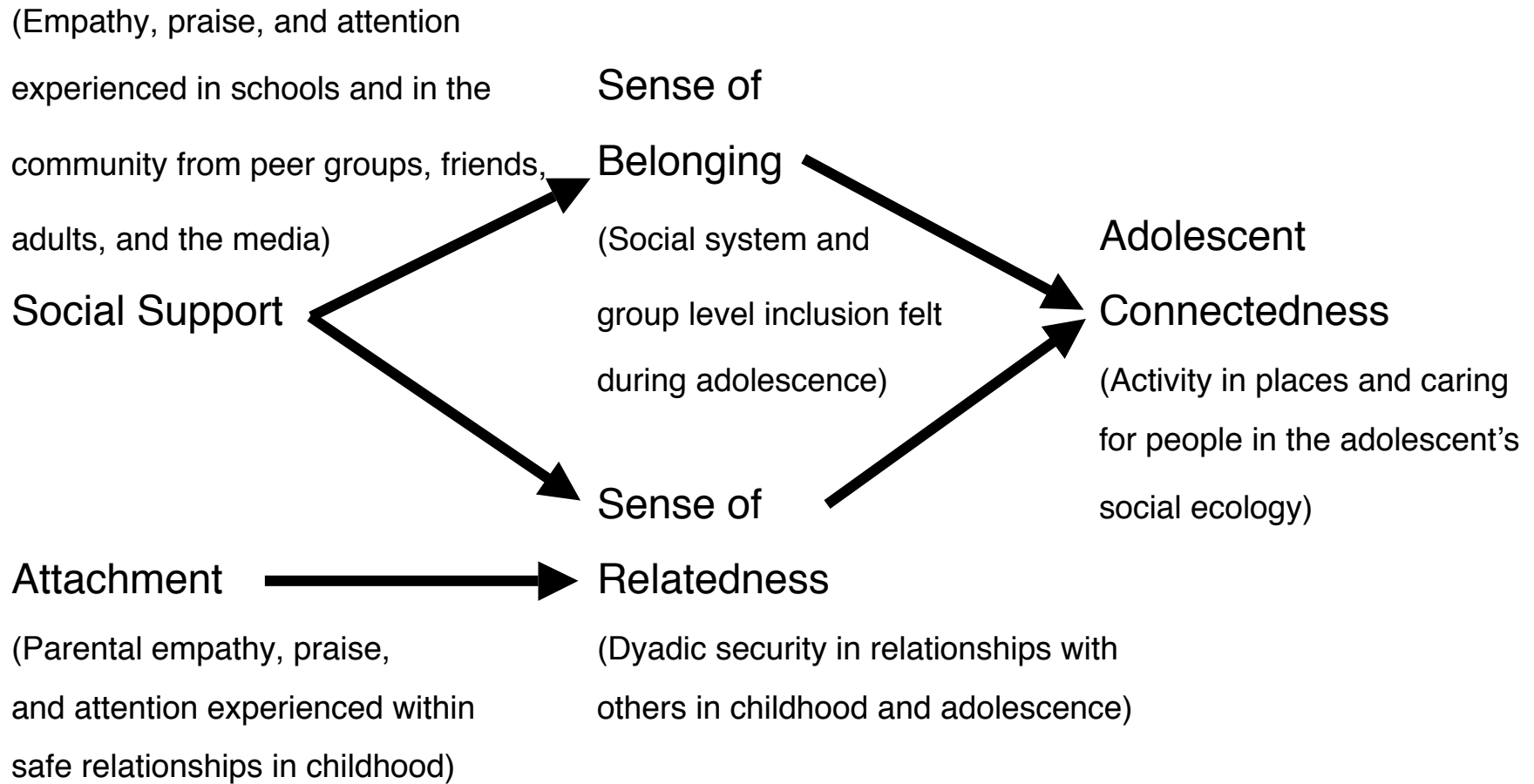
(Empathy, praise, and attention

experienced in schools and in the   Sense of

community from peer groups, friends,   Belonging

adults, and the media)   (Social system and   Adolescent

Social Support   group level inclusion felt   Connectedness

                                                          during adolescence)   (Activity in places and caring

                                                                                                          for people in the adolescent's

                                                          Sense of   social ecology)

Attachment ⟶ Relatedness

(Parental empathy, praise,   (Dyadic security in relationships with

and attention experienced within   others in childhood and adolescence)

safe relationships in childhood)

Figure 1. A hypothesized model of the sequence of attachment, social support, relatedness, and belonging in the development of adolescent connectedness.
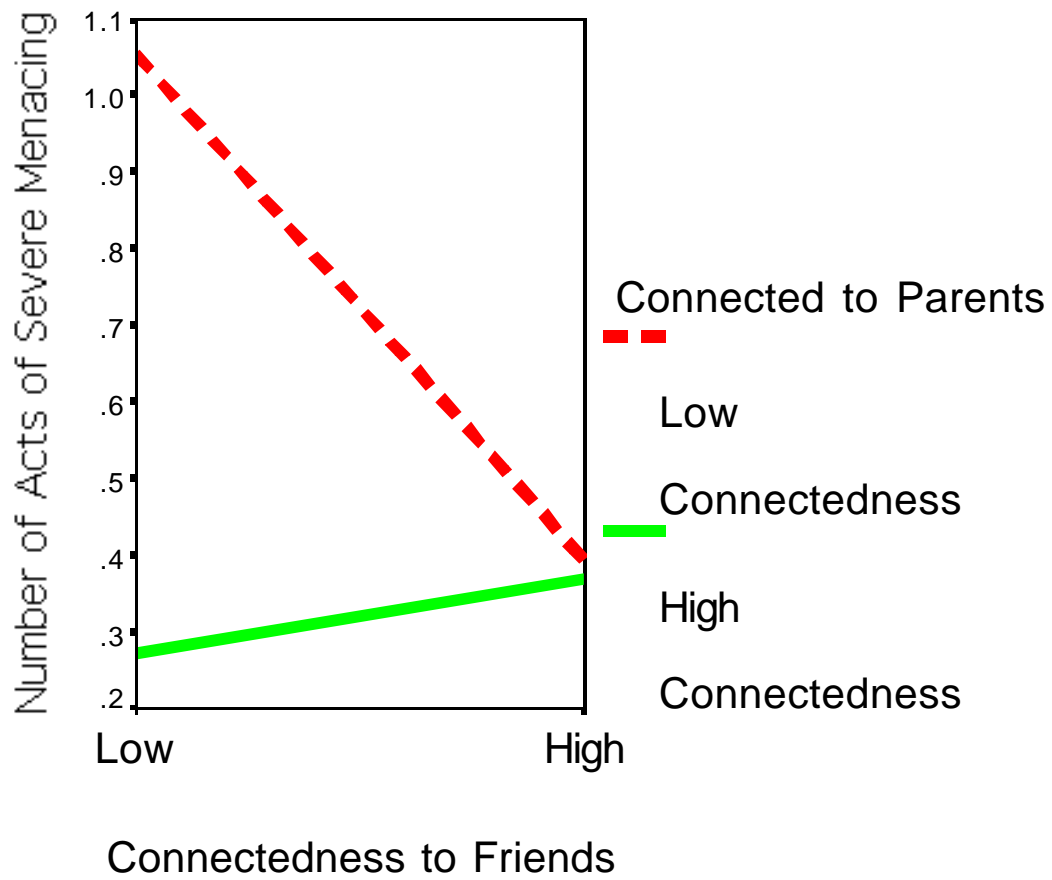
Figure 2. The interaction between connectedness to friends and to parents in explaining youths' engagement in acts of severe menacing violent behavior. Only youth with low connectedness to friends and low connectedness to parents reported, on average, having engaged in one or more such violent acts.
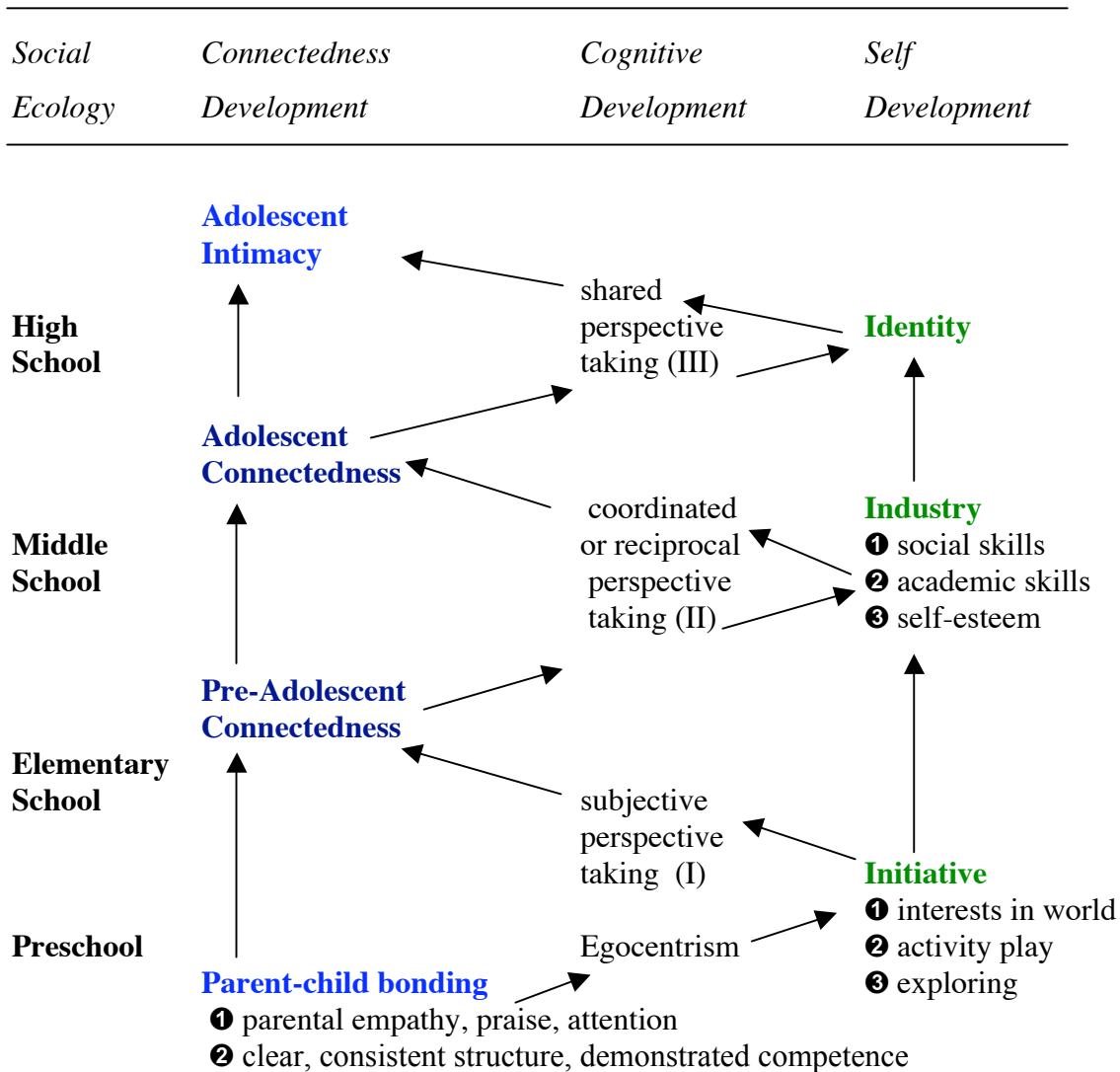
Social Ecology	*Connectedness Development*	*Cognitive Development*	*Self Development*

Adolescent Intimacy

High School

shared perspective taking (III)

Identity

Adolescent Connectedness

Middle School

coordinated or reciprocal perspective taking (II)

Industry
❶ social skills
❷ academic skills
❸ self-esteem

Pre-Adolescent Connectedness

Elementary School

subjective perspective taking (I)

Initiative
❶ interests in world
❷ activity play
❸ exploring

Preschool

Egocentrism

Parent-child bonding
❶ parental empathy, praise, attention
❷ clear, consistent structure, demonstrated competence

Figure 3. A topographical model illustrating the weaving tension of developmental growth between involvement with others (connectedness) and developments of the self as a function of cognitive developments in perspective-taking abilities. The achievement of connectedness in each new social ecology is dependent on the successful implementation of burgeoning perspective-taking skills and social skills in relationships in social contexts. Each of the self-developments described by Erikson results from the successful establishment of connectedness and the subsequent use of perspective-taking skills to construct a more differentiated and integrated self-understanding.

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