

"Come Together" Social Connectedness Among Pacific University Undergraduates

Richard B. Fairbanks, Nikki T. Alenonorin, Whitney K. Groeger, Declan F. Bartel

Presented to Research Methods, Dr. H. Island, Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR. April 27, 2021

BACKGROUND

In the United States, the overall undergraduate attrition rate is a staggering 40 percent, with a 30 percent dropout rate among first-year students (Educationdata.org). Not only is this problematic for colleges, but as tuition supports curricular programs, employee salaries, and student resources, this problem trickles down to students. (Raisman, 2013). Tinto (2017) asserts the level of student persistence is related to social interaction with other students, self-efficacy, perceived worth, and their overall sense of social belonging. These challenges may contribute to feelings of lacking control, anxiety, or depression (Rith, 2020). According to Heinz Kohut's Theory of Social Belonging, Lee and Robbins (1995) theorized that three stable and enduring elements characterize a sense of belonging; companionship, affiliation, and connectedness and are primary factors that affect people's overall sense of social belonging and in turn, their interpersonal success. (Lee & Robbins, 1995).

Once the developing adolescent has achieved a sense of social companionship and affiliation, social connectedness (SC) will emerge, allowing them to feel emotionally stable within a larger social context. In finding a sense of social self, in terms of socially accepted behavior, comes social connectedness (Lee and Robbins, 1995). Social connectedness allows people to feel a sense of empathy for fellow members within their communities. With the advent of good social connectedness, a person can fulfill social roles such as a parent, friend, or teammate, with more relational success (Lee & Robins, 2001).

An established wealth of literature exists on the psychosocial benefits of participating in contact sports while other campus activities have little to no research on subjective scales of well-being and social engagement. Choral singing elicits a neurophysiological response through group-produced music. Though this response pertains to each person, the shared experience facilitates stronger interpersonal ties between singers (Bullack et al., 2018; Valentine & Evans, 2001).

Contemporary literature indicates the importance of sports in facilitating social cohesion and interpersonal trust (Adie et al., 2012). Without each player's work, the team is at risk of failing or losing and may increase injury risk. Motivation affects the likelihood of athletes to persist through mental blocks and injuries. These adversities are causally linked to connectedness feelings facilitated through comradery, successes, and failures regarding each activity's goals (Adie et al., 2012; Curran et al., 2013; Safraoui, 2014).

The purpose of this project is to explore the shared social qualities of college athletic teams to other collegiate group activities (e.g., choir, performance art, and student government), subsequently providing evidence for a relationship between social connectedness in students and on-campus group affiliation. Since college athletes have higher retention and graduation rates (McElveen & Ibele, 2019), social cohesion (Safraoui, 2014), self-efficacy (Adie et al., 2012; Curran et al., 2013), and belonging than the general college population (Lee & Robbins, 2001), we predict that students in team-athletics, choir, performance arts, and student government will report higher social belonging scores than the unaffiliated population.

Empirical Question

Is there a significant relationship between social connectedness and group affiliation (i.e., Choir, team-athletics, student government, and performance arts) for Pacific University undergraduate students? What is the relationship between the estimated individual and total time spent engaging in collegiate activity and social belongingness and social connectedness scores?

PROPOSED METHOD

Participants

A one-tailed correlational power analysis resulted in a projected sample size of 250 participants, yielding a power coefficient of .95. Convenience and Snowball sampling will occur on the Pacific University campus among the undergraduate population, using email solicitation, list serves, fliers, and word-of-mouth. We anticipate the average age of the sample will be 21 years ($SD=5.0$).

Materials

The materials for this study included a standard demographic measure as well as the following published, cited measures:

Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R) is a 6-point Likert-like agreement scale with interval values starting at 1 (i.e., strongly disagree) to 6 (i.e., strongly agree). The self-assessment reflects interpersonal views on social situations and a sense of subjective belongingness (i.e., I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers, I feel close to people, I feel like an outsider) (Lee, R.M., Draper, M., & Lee, S. (2001).

Design and Procedure

Participants will receive an email with a link to a Qualtrics survey containing Lee and Robin's Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R) with subsequent instructions on filling out a Likert scale, the purpose of the study, along with a demographic questionnaire (i.e., age, school year, estimated hours of social engagement per week, ethnicity, gender expression) and a survey on the average hours spent engaging with the social modalities in question. We will acquire the email addresses through each coach or conductor when we ask for participation. Through the extended statistical analysis, covariates (i.e., age, school year, total hours of social engagement, ethnicity, gender) will be weighted for statistical significance. Appropriate statistical analyses will be completed using SPSS®.

PROSED RESULTS

The results will be interpreted with an A One-Way Analysis of Covariance for interval level data demonstrating that sports, performing arts, and choir had the highest mean SCS-R scores out of the five levels of IV one ($p < 0.5$). Tukey's post-hoc-analysis will be conducted to test differences among sample means for significance. A Pearson's r correlation will analyze the relationship between time-spent per week in activities and participant's scores on the SCS-R.

CONCLUSIONS

The rising attrition rate in college is concerning, not only for faculty but students. We anticipate the results will demonstrate whether intergroup activities mitigate feelings of connection among one's peers and, more specifically, the prevalence of social connectedness (SC) among Pacific undergraduates. The prospective results from this study assess the prevalence of social connectedness across different groups on campus while creates new possibilities for further investigation of correlational research on the topic. Results from this study should provide the impetus for appropriate consideration by Pacific University's Board of Trustees into the efficacy of performance arts and its relationship to SC and how these activities mitigate students' social adversities and possible subsequent attrition.

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