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Assessment of awareness of connectedness as a culturally-based protective factor for Alaska native youth.

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Abstract

Research with Native Americans has identified connectedness as a culturally based **protective factor** against substance abuse and **suicide**. Connectedness refers to the interrelated welfare of the individual, one's family, one's community, and the natural environment. We developed an 18-item quantitative assessment of awareness of connectedness and tested it with 284 Alaska Native youth. Evaluation with confirmatory **factor** analysis and item response theory identified a 12-item subset that functions satisfactorily in a second-order four-**factor** model. The proposed Awareness of Connectedness Scale (ACS) displays good convergent and discriminant validity, and correlates positively with hypothesized **protective** factors such as reasons for living and communal mastery. The measure has utility in the study of culture-specific **protective** factors and as an outcomes measure for behavioral health programs with Native American youth.

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