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## DO ELEVEN- AND TWELVE-YEAR-OLDS NEED COUNSELLORS?

A trend towards more counselling in the elementary school has been developing in the last few years. Questions arising from this development are: what problems do these students have? And, do they want help in solving them?

In an effort to become more aware of the problems concerning eleven- and twelve-year-old students the Mooney Problem Check List was administered in the fall of 1968 to the two senior classes in each of two public elementary schools. Both these schools have an enrollment of over 600 students. They are located in a low socioeconomic area, where there are a large number of new Canadian families. The results of the Check List were analysed for the 119 eleven- and twelve-year-old students in these classes.

The Mooney Problem Check List, Junior High School Form, is "a count of the problems which the student has identified as matters of concern to him (Mooney and Gordon, 1950, p. 9)." The Check List is divided into seven areas—Health and Physical Development (HPD), School (S), Home and Family (HF), Money, Work, and Future (MWF), Boy and Girl Relations (BG), Relations to People in General (PG), and Self-centered Concerns (SC). In each area there are thirty items.

Results:

Table 1 shows the seven problem areas with the mean number of problems selected in each area for boys and girls. The areas are ranked by number of problems chosen from greatest to least.

TABLE 1  
 Mean Scores and Rank Order of Problem Areas

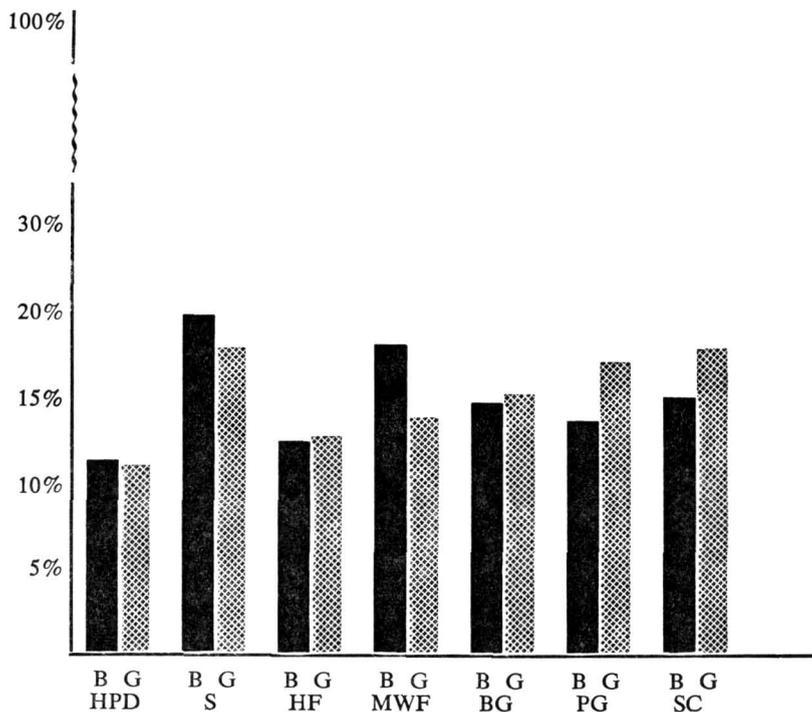
Problem Areas	Number of Items in Test	Mean Scores		Rank Order	
		Boys (N=61)	Girls (N=57*)	Boys	Girls
Health and Physical Development	30	3.21	3.33	6.5	7
School	30	5.87	5.56	1	2
Home and Family	30	3.21	3.47	6.5	6
Money, Work and Future	30	5.08	4.32	2	5
Boy and Girl Relations	30	4.28	4.68	4	4
Relations to People in General	30	3.85	5.46	5	3
Self-centered Concerns	30	4.42	5.68	3	1
Total	210	29.92	32.50		

\*Excludes one girl with 122 problems. No other student selected more than 95 problems.

The percentage of problems for boys and for girls in each area is shown in Diagram 1.

DIAGRAM 1.

**Percentage of Boys and of Girls with Problems in Each Problem Area**



It is of interest to note specific items from the different problem areas which were of concern to these students. Only those items which 25% or more of the pupils checked were selected. The statements are grouped according to the areas of greatest concern for both boys and girls.

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
<i>School:</i>		
Not interested in certain subjects	37.7	41.4
Don't like to study	44.3	31.0
Afraid of failing in school work	31.1	39.6
Not spending enough time in study	29.5	31.0
Afraid of tests	19.7	41.4
Afraid to speak up in class	16.3	41.4
Too much school work to do at home	27.9	27.5
Can't keep my mind on my studies	27.9	25.9
Trouble with arithmetic	15.5	27.5
Trouble with writing	36.1	10.3

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
<i>Self-centered Concerns:</i>		
Sometimes not being as honest as I should be	27.9	37.9
Sometimes wishing I'd never been born	27.9	36.2
Trying to stop a bad habit	26.2	31.0
Being punished for something I didn't do	31.1	24.1
Finding it hard to talk about my troubles	18.0	36.2
Being afraid of making mistakes	19.6	34.5
Can't forget some mistakes I've made	24.6	25.8
Being nervous	18.0	29.3
Forgetting things	16.4	27.6
Sometimes lying without meaning to	18.0	25.8
Feeling ashamed of something I've done	8.1	29.3
Not having as much fun as other kids have	6.6	25.8
<i>Money, Work and Future:</i>		
Wanting to earn some money of my own	47.5	48.3
Wondering what becomes of people when they die	37.7	37.9
Wondering if I'll ever get married	37.7	31.0
Deciding what to take in high school	24.5	25.9
Spending money foolishly	26.2	13.8
<i>Boy and Girl Relations:</i>		
So often not allowed to go out at night	26.2	27.6
Keeping myself neat and nice looking	24.6	34.5
Nothing interesting to do in my spare time	27.9	15.5
Learning how to dance	9.8	29.3
Boys don't seem to like me	4.91	27.6
<i>Relations to People in General:</i>		
Wishing people liked me better	23.0	32.7
Missing someone very much	18.0	32.7
Disliking someone	21.3	29.3
Wanting a more pleasing personality	16.3	31.0
Being disliked by someone	19.7	27.6
Being teased	18.0	25.9
Feelings too easily hurt	8.2	27.6
Feeling nobody likes me	8.2	25.9
<i>Home and Family:</i>		
Not getting along with a brother or sister	31.1	27.6
<i>Health and Physical Development:</i>		
Don't get enough sleep	29.5	31.0
Often not hungry for my meals	21.3	32.8
Have trouble with my teeth	26.2	22.4

The percentages indicate that many boys and girls are aware of their problems, particularly in the areas of School and Self-centered Concerns. It is interesting to note that the boys are very concerned about their writing while the girls are more concerned about arithmetic. The percentage of both

boys and girls wishing sometimes that they had never been born is rather startling for this age group. The girls seem to be well aware that they are sensitive to the thoughts of others about themselves, as indicated by the high percentage selecting: feelings being hurt, feeling that no one liked them, and feeling ashamed of something they have done. Very few boys felt that these items were a problem. These boys and girls, even at this age, are striving for some independence as indicated by the very high percentage wishing to earn some money of their own. This stress on money may be related to the socio-economic level of their families. More than one third of the girls mentioned that they found it difficult to talk about their problems.

Distributed among the areas there are certain statements indicating fear of something—"Afraid of tests," "Afraid of failing in school work," "Afraid to speak up in class," "Afraid of the future," and "Being afraid of making mistakes." The boys did not seem to be as concerned, but the girls reacted in the following way:

**TABLE 2**  
Percentage of Girls Underlining "Afraid of" Statements

<i>Number Identified as Problems</i>	<i>% of Girls</i>
5	3.44
4 or more	20.69
3 or more	36.21
2 or more	48.28
1 or more	68.96

On the last page of the Mooney Problem Check Lists the students are asked "Would you like to talk to someone about your problems?" Table 3 shows the percentage of students who replied in the affirmative, negative, or otherwise. Over 50% of the girls replied that they would be interested in counselling, compared to 30% of the boys. Many of the students gave reasons for their answers. Some of the students who replied "no," felt it would be too embarrassing, that it would not help, that they had no need for counselling, or that they would rather work out their problems by themselves. Some of the reasons for wishing counselling were the desire to talk to someone, the feeling that there was nothing to be ashamed of, the feeling that in this way they would be "free from problems," and that they would be able to get the problems off their minds. One qualification mentioned on a number of papers was the stipulation that the person must be someone they could trust.

**TABLE 3**  
Percentage of Students Wishing to Discuss Problems

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Boys (N=61)</i>	<i>Girls (N=58)</i>	<i>Total (N=119)</i>
	( <i>%</i> )	( <i>%</i> )	( <i>%</i> )
Yes	31.15	53.45	42.02
No	36.39	15.52	26.05
Don't know	9.84	6.90	8.40
To friend or parent	9.84	10.34	10.08
Did not answer	13.11	13.79	13.44

Since over 40% of these students replied "yes" to the question of discussing their problems with someone, it would seem to be indicated that there is a need for counsellors in the elementary schools and that the students would appreciate the opportunity to discuss their problems.

#### REFERENCE

Mooney, R. L., & Gordon, L. V. *The Mooney problem check lists manual*. New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1950.

### NECESSITE DES CONSEILLERS A L'ECOLE ELEMENTAIRE

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*Le Système de Diagnostic Mooney* dans sa version *junior* fut administré aux étudiants de quatre classes *senior* de deux écoles élémentaires d'un milieu socio-économique défavorisé.

L'analyse des problèmes pointés par 119 jeunes de 11 ans et 12 ans indiquent que sur les 130 choix proposés les garçons en retiennent trente et les filles 32.

Les problèmes des garçons sont centrés sur l'école, ceux des filles sur elles-mêmes. Bon nombre d'étudiants ont les mêmes problèmes. Vingt-six pour cent (26%) des filles et des garçons quelquefois souhaiteraient n'être jamais nés et plus du tiers des filles trouvent que c'est difficile de parler de leurs problèmes.

Attendu que plus de 40% expriment le désir de se confier à quelqu'un, on peut donc croire fondé le besoin de conseillers à l'école élémentaire.