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Loneliness and Self-Esteem at Different Levels of the Self

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Poster Presentation 3

LONELINESS AND SELF-ESTEEM AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE SELF

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In an extension of previous research done by Hawkley, et al., loneliness is proposed to be multi-dimensional with three unique dimensions: isolation, connectedness, and belongingness. Isolation is hypothesized to be a feeling of being alone. Connectedness is having satisfactory one-on-one relationships. Belongingness is engaging in group-centered activity. These levels are hypothesized to be correlated with three unique aspects of the self: personal, relational, and collective. The personal self consists of specific attributes and traits, such as academic ability and athleticism. The relational self is derived from one-on-one intimate relationships with others, like identifying oneself as a boyfriend or girlfriend. The collective self consists of a person's membership in a social group and the value that the person places on that group. Similarly, Brewer (1996) proposes that self-esteem is experienced differently at each level of the self. Personal self-esteem is how a person feels based on their individual traits and characteristics. Relational self-esteem is based on a person's perceptions of exhibiting appropriate behavior in a one-on-one relationship. Collective self-esteem is how one evaluates his or her participation in a group and how others evaluate the group as well. We propose that loneliness and self-esteem are experienced differently at each of these levels of self (personal, relational, and collective) and that there is a stronger relationship between loneliness and self-esteem within each level relative to between levels. Dimensions of loneliness and self-esteem were examined by having male and female undergraduates (ages 18-21) complete the Loneliness Dimension Scale (which measures isolation, connectedness, and belongingness) the Collective Self-Esteem Scale, (a measure of collective self-esteem) the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (a personal self-esteem measure), and the Relational Self-Esteem Scale (a measure of relational self-esteem).