

JOSEPH A. MOORE,
*Memorial University
of Newfoundland;*
VELLO SERMAT,
*York University,
Toronto, Ontario.*

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND SELF-REPORTED LONELINESS*

ABSTRACT: Undergraduate students who wished to enter sensitivity groups filled in Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory and also indicated their degree of loneliness. Ss low in loneliness obtained higher scores on the personality scale, with eight of the 12 subscales significantly different from Ss high in loneliness. There follows a discussion on the supported general hypothesis, that individuals who identify themselves as being more lonely are also likely to be less self-actualized.

The views on loneliness of Rogers (1961, 1970) and Whitehorn (1961) suggest that the lonely individual is less likely to give direct expression to his own talents, abilities, needs, etc., i.e. he is likely to be less "self-actualized." In the present study, one measure of self-actualization, Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (1964, 1966), was correlated with the degree of self-reported loneliness to determine whether there are significant personality differences between more and less lonely people on this particular dimension.

METHOD

Subjects

Ss were 125 York University undergraduate students who responded to an invitation to participate in sensitivity groups conducted by the Psychological Services Department of York University. Each participant was asked to complete Shostrom's Inventory, an outcome expectation questionnaire which is not relevant in this study, and a survey of their activities. The latter contained two questions concerning experiences of loneliness: To what extent have you felt lonely since you arrived on campus? To what extent did you feel lonely during the past year? Since these two loneliness questions correlated .82, the subsequent statistical analyses were based on self-reported loneliness over the past year.

Measures

Shostrom's Inventory (1964, 1966) was used to obtain a measure of self-actualization. It consists of 150 items, each of which requires the person to choose between two opposite statements, both representing

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personality characteristics which purport to reflect self-actualization. Research on Shostrom's Inventory suggests it is reasonably valid and reliable (Foulds, 1969; Knapp, 1965; Leib & Snyder, 1967; Shostrom & Knapp, 1966).

Loneliness was measured by asking Ss to rate separately, on a six-point continuum ranging from "none-at-all" to "all-the-time," the degree of loneliness they had experienced since their arrival on campus and also during the past year. Ss were then rank-ordered according to the latter. The 41 Ss who indicated that they were "not-at-all" lonely or "a little lonely" were called low in loneliness and the 32 Ss who indicated that they were lonely "frequently" or "all-the-time," were called high in loneliness.

TABLE 1
Comparison of High and Low Loneliness Groups on Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory

Scale	Ss Low in Loneliness (N = 41)		Ss High in Loneliness (N = 32)		t	p* <
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Time Competent	16.4	3.6	14.3	3.0	2.48	.01
Inner Directed	83.9	10.3	77.7	10.8	2.33	.05
Self-Actualizing Value	19.4	3.0	18.0	3.1	1.93	.05
Existentiality	21.8	3.4	21.3	2.9	0.62	
Feeling Reactivity	16.3	3.0	14.7	2.9	2.08	.05
Spontaneity	12.5	2.8	10.0	2.9	3.50	.01
Self-Regard	10.9	2.8	8.8	2.7	2.97	.01
Self-Acceptance	15.0	3.4	14.2	3.0	0.94	
Nature of Man	11.9	2.2	11.5	1.8	0.77	
Synergy	6.9	1.4	6.8	1.1	0.11	
Acceptance of						
Aggression	15.1	3.2	14.0	2.8	1.92	.05
Capacity for Intimate	17.9	3.2	16.5	3.3	1.69	.05
Contact						

*one-tailed test

RESULTS

There were no significant differences between men and women in loneliness. On all Shostrom's scales Ss low in loneliness obtained higher scores than did Ss high in loneliness, suggesting a greater overall level of self-actualization for the former (Table 1). Results for five scales had $p < .05$ and for three, $p < .01$. Both major scales (Time Competent and Inner Directed) yielded significant differences between groups. Thus the results support the general hypothesis that individuals who identify themselves as being lonely are also likely to be less self-actualized.

DISCUSSION

According to Shostrom (1964, 1966), the Time Competent scale indicates that Ss low in loneliness live more fully in the "here-and-now"

than Ss high in loneliness; they are not unduly burdened by guilt, regret, and resentment concerning their past nor by rigid or over-idealistic goals for the future. Scores on the scale, Inner Directed, suggest they are more inner-directed, i.e., guided more by internal motivations than by external pressures and influences, than Ss high in loneliness.

The significantly lower scores of Ss high in loneliness on the Feeling Reactivity, Spontaneity, Acceptance of Aggression, and Capacity for Intimate Contact scales indicate that these individuals report tendencies to find it more difficult to recognize and to act on their feelings, to express themselves spontaneously, to view anger and aggression in themselves as normal and acceptable phenomena, and to develop personal, intimate relationships with others. This interpretation is supported by an unpublished study by the second author, showing that most Ss rank the difficulty of communicating with another person about personal thoughts and feelings as the key problem in loneliness, and that such difficulty is related to the degree of severity of self-reported loneliness. In addition, the present results also show Ss high in loneliness are lower on the subscales for Self-actualizing Value and Self-regard.

The sample studied was composed of volunteers for sensitivity groups, who, on the basis of other unpublished data, appear to be somewhat more lonely than the general student population. Furthermore, it may be that the loneliness experienced by these Ss is of a particular kind. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings to other populations.

RESUME: On a demandé à des collégiens qui souhaitaient de participer à un groupe de sensibilisation de remplir l' "Inventaire de Personnalité de Shostrom" et d'indiquer en plus leur degré de solitude. Les sujets les moins solitaires obtinrent des scores significativement plus élevés que les plus solitaires à 8 des 12 échelles de l'inventaire. L'article présente une discussion de l'hypothèse selon laquelle les individus qui se croient plus solitaires sont aussi ceux qui s'actualisent le moins.

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