

Abstract Dissertation

Comparing Own and Other Views on the Self:

Alienation from a Lack of Shared Reality.

An interdisciplinary approach (literature, theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology) towards the multifaceted concept of alienation provides the theoretical background of the study.

Alienation is considered to involve the constructs of loneliness, social isolation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement, other-estrangement, and cultural-estrangement.

A correlational study explores the relationship between unshared self-concepts and alienation-related problems. Shared reality helps (1) to establish and maintain social relationships and (2) to structure individuals understanding of self and world. Hence, an individual's breakdown or lack of shared reality should result in a *deficiency or collapse* of (1) social relationships (i.e. loneliness, social isolation) and (2) understanding of self and world (i.e. self- and other estrangement, help-and powerlessness, norm-and meaninglessness).

The alienation hypothesis was tested in a questionnaire study with 360 undergraduates. The Selves questionnaire measuring own and others standpoints on the self was used to define actual self-concepts as shared or unshared.

The ratio of unshared self-characteristics was related with several alienation and loneliness measurements (e.g. MMPI-2 and UCLA). As predicted, unshared self-concepts are significantly correlated with loneliness, social isolation, self- and other estrangement, powerlessness, anomia, and overall alienation. These results provide a strong initial support of the notion that a lack of shared reality induces severe suffering from alienation-related problems.