

Shared Subjective Experience as a Catalyst for Prosocial Harmony: Study on Quieting the Ego
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Abstract

We examined whether or not I-sharing—the belief that one shares an identical subjective experience with another person—in its unique ability to foster existential connectedness (Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006), could be used to promote prosocial behavior through ‘quieting’ the ego (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998) and increased perspective taking. In addition, this study examined whether the constructs of existential isolation and existential connection are quantitatively different than social isolation and social connection in measures of fulfillment—need to belong, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence (Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004); hostile cognitions (Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks 2003; Bushman, 1996); and willingness to perspective take. This study utilized I-sharing to manipulate feelings of existential isolation/connection and Williams, Cheung and Choi’s (2000) cyberball—a virtual game of catch—to manipulate feelings of social connection/isolation. We predicted that existential connection and isolation would have different effects on fulfillment measures, hostile cognitions and willingness to perspective take than social isolation and connection. In addition, we predicted that I-sharing will have the greatest impact on willingness to perspective take.