Examining psychosocial correlates of loneliness and perceived isolation among marginalized youth

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Purpose of Project

- Leveraging machine learning to categorize social media content related to loneliness and perceived isolation
- Determining impact of family, school, social factors on loneliness and perceived isolation
- Identify modifiable intervention targets for reducing loneliness and perceived isolation

Current Understanding

- Youth Loneliness is linked to increases in overall mortality, substance use, depression and suicidality.
- However, the associations above are not well studied among marginalized youth. Given the all-time high rates of depression and suicidality among youth, these studies must be a priority.
- It is crucial to understand the impact of loneliness on mental health among marginalized youth for identifying potential intervention targets against youth loneliness.

University of Pittsburgh

We will **engage youth** and leverage mixed methods and social media data to **increase our understanding of** risk and protective factors for, and mental health outcomes associated with **loneliness and social isolation among LGBTQ+, Black, and Latin American youth**.

Project Methods

- Repeated online surveys
  - Youth Collaborative to provide feedback on methods and recruitment materials
- Post-survey qualitative interviews
- Analysis of social media data
  - Anonymized social media user profiles

Project Deliverables

- Establish a Youth Collaborative comprised of local youth from marginalized backgrounds.
- Quantitative & qualitative data collection
- Presentations at national health conferences and manuscript submissions
- Results will inform grant proposals focused on intervention development targeting loneliness.
- Infographics and easy-to-read materials will be made available to the public

Pitt Impact

- Pitt graduate students to aid in data analysis and have opportunities to publish and/or present on results
- Notoriety given to Pitt research community through national dissemination plan

National Impact

- Dissemination to include major publications whose audiences include guardians to youth, marginalized communities, and/or youth-focused communication channels
- Research creates opportunities for further social media and behavioral interventions directed at LGBTQ youth

Community Partners

- Casa San José
- Hugh Lane
- Proud Haven