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An Analysis of Personal Writing Incidence and Frequency and Its Relation to Self-Reported Scores of Depression and Loneliness

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Oral Presentation 2.2

**AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL WRITING INCIDENCE AND FREQUENCY
AND ITS RELATION TO SELF-REPORTED SCORES OF
DEPRESSION AND LONELINESS**

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Conventional wisdom suggests that the release of one's emotions helps promote healthy development and contributes positively to mental health. One of the common methods used to release emotions is personal writing, such as journaling, diary keeping, or poetry writing. Though this practice of using personal writing to express and release emotion is thought to be highly prevalent, a dearth of empirical evidence exists to support such claims (Pennebaker, 1995; Magee, 1999). Therefore, this study sought to describe the incidence and frequency of personal writing among a college-aged population using sixty student respondents. Students were administered a questionnaire called the Personal Writing Questionnaire-Revised version (PWQ-R) that contained self-report questions regarding personal writing incidence, frequency, type, and motivation. A Depression and loneliness inventories were also included in the instrument.

Following analysis of the data collected from these questionnaires, we seek to support the following hypotheses. It was hypothesized that females will report greater incidence and frequency of personal writing when compared to males. Further, it was hypothesized that females will report greater use of personal writing across the lifespan. In an attempt to determine whether a relationship between personal writing and mental health status exists, the depression and loneliness inventories will also be used in analysis. The preliminary hypothesis states that we expect that increased self-disclosure, by means of personal writing, will correlate negatively with scores of depression and/or loneliness. That is, if one engages in personal writing, one is more likely to be less depressed or less lonely when compared to those who do not use personal writing.

Pennebaker, J. W. (Ed). (1995). Emotion, disclosure, and health. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Magee, V. (1999). "Making up her own mind: A psychological study of the role of personal writing in adolescent girls' development." Unpublished dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.