

BETTER TOGETHER

Discovering Joy in Company

INITIATIVE



Social Network Map

Friends, needs and communities

User and Design Guide

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Check www.initiative-gemeinsamkeit.de/network-map/

Introduction

One research project that was to my knowledge never undertaken was to do a full capture of network structure of a persons ego on a sample population and use this data to regress it on loneliness measures.

By network structure I mean such social maps as are evidenced by the samples of "Revisiting friendship" by Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl. This method of data capture is of course very time intensive, as usually involves the researcher in a prolonged conversation of two hours or so with the participant capturing the key characteristics of each connection edge and person.

However it is the kind of analysis that holds the promise to understand how certain items within loneliness scales come to be triggered. Whilst it is true that the exact feeling of loneliness will always remain a subjective feeling, there can be however benefits in objectifying and quantifying it further than e.g. the UCLA or DeJong Gierveld scale currently do, and further identifying its drivers.

This project intends to set up a data structure design that could be at the foundation of such an analysis. As the data capture will be time costly, there is great sense in developing this and refining it within discussions for a while with a variety of different conversation partners and also possible early adopter trial-people, before fixing it as a general standard like UCLA or something to make future such studies comparable and integrateable.

If you are interested in this project and have feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes
Christian Langkamp

Purposes of a Workbook to create a personal network map

1. Exercise for self reflection - user benefit

Through working through the Workbook the user gains insights for themselves and their experience of loneliness. Having such a guided exercise may structure the approach and thinking process and reduce unproductive or even harmful rumination.

2. Data generation for science

Providing a Data Export sheet in plain text may make it easy also to solicit the data. Whilst with questionnaires users may be sceptical of whether the data is really all staying anonymous or will be deleted after a period, or will be deleted automatically if they stop the questionnaire half way through, with exporting a text file and submitting it to a website will make it very clear what data is submitted and that indeed no personal data usable to identify the person is transmitted.

3. Data generation for therapy & social connection workshops

In treatments on loneliness it often takes several sessions of therapist and patient to identify issues and root causes, as the information provision to the therapist alone can capture several sessions. A structured approach - while potentially depriving the therapist of some of the valuable qualitative information - can however rapidly shorten the base information acquisition allowing the therapist to focus much faster on pain points. Likewise social connection workshops can be held much more effectively if everyone arrives reflected about their key connection on a comparable level.

4. Data generation for the LLM counsellor

It is by now a fact that in particular youths, but also adults turn increasingly to the ever more powerful LLMs as 24/7 counsellors. I will not wade into the ethics and problems of this, on which there is a fruitful and vigorous debate, but simply observe that if thousands of people are doing this, then a great benefit can be obtained by supporting those people in making the most of this channel of help on dealing with and overcoming loneliness.

Design: Base structure

The design is that of three elements.

1. Data Capture

An Excel work book "data capture" in the XLSX open Excel format. This has all the master data, and is protected to ensure that the User does not accidentally modify and thus destroy the internal structure of the sheet.

This has a sheet "data extract" from which the data can be exported into a CSV or TXT plaintext file. This workbook is intended to be rather stable.

2. Data Analysis

An Excel work book "data analysis". This has a sheet "data import" in which the content of the the data capture sheet can be pasted in. This has the transformation, analysis with formulas and descriptive statistics. From there the exports both for self analysis, export for the therapist and JSON export for the LLM are generated. This will develop over time, thus allowing the user to use the data extract from the data capture workbook to paste it into a newer version to make use of the added functionalities.

3. Summaries and Exports

Summary sheet for self analysis

PDF Report

PDF Report for Therapist

JSON for LLM

Design Data capture workbook

1. **Instructions:** Change of Language - currently English and German
2. **Data Extract:** Column A contains all the plain text to paste into a .txt file
3. **Roster:** List of people of relevance - name generator. Here name by name people to whom the respondee has a connection are listed. Both close ties and weak ties.
4. **FEAST+Growth:** This sheet captures the nature on the connections that are active. This is based on the process model of FEAST and Growth explained in "Practical Friendship" and the Connection Talk series.
5. **Needs & Loneliness:** This sheet captures the description of the social needs of the respondee and their experience of loneliness.
6. **Communities:** This sheet captures descriptions of the communities the respondee attends and belongs to. This can be the work place, a church community, a sportsclub, or a neighbourhood.
7. **Resources and Habits:** This sheet looks at resources, habits for connection and interaction, as well as social needs.

Optional sheets

8. **Periods and levels of connectedness during those:** This sheet captures the various prior periods of life, and their level of connectedness, to see how prolonged loneliness has been.
9. **I-as-friend and my-ideal-friend:** This sheet captures how the respondee sees themselves and what friendship preferences for an ideal friend they possess.
10. **Maintenance - Loss - Conflict:** This sheet captures the history of losses of friends, of friendships and connections that faded.
11. **Print Export to PDF**

Design Data Analysis Workbook

1. **Instructions:** Language choice
2. **Data Input:** This is where into column A the Data Extract from the Data capture workbook should be entered.
3. **RO, FG, NL, CO, RH, PC, MF, IF, ML, LU ...** Then there are a range of hidden transformation sheets extracting the data from Data input and transforming it into processed statistics.
4. **Overview:** Summary
5. **Exports:** Export_PDF_Self, Export_PDF_Therapist, Export_JSON_LLM

Research Project

The research project will only commence once the basic project parameters are in place:

1. Necessary and desirable variables discussed with a number of peers and agreed upon as preliminary standard.
2. Excel workbook "data capture" finalised and translated into relevant languages.
3. Excel workbook "data analysis" finalised to provide suggestions and utility to every participant.
4. Academic prime partner identified to lead the research project, potentially also to coordinate with substreams in different community groups.
5. Statistical power calculated - number of participants needed to give sufficient power to regressions on loneliness and social needs measures.

About the Initiative GemEinsamkeit

The Initiative GemEinsamkeit is a small NGO with the aim of creating a knowledge and networking platform for practical, applied work on loneliness. Globally and in Germany, there are already numerous projects that have helped lonely people and fostered sociability and high-quality friendships. Through building our network and ongoing discussions with our partners, we aim to:

1. Collect promising, ready-to-use approaches.
2. Discuss them in suitable online and in-person formats.
3. Provide professional support for their implementation in pilot projects and gather feedback.
4. Aggregate these approaches into a comprehensible, publicly accessible, and continuously evolving collection (Open Educational Resource).
5. Distribute finalized ready-to-use approaches within our network.

We do not conduct our own scientific research, as scientific research and societal analysis are already comprehensively and excellently carried out by the European research network "Loneliness in Europe" and the Kompetenznetzwerk Einsamkeit mandated by the Federal Government / BMBFSJ through 2026 . Our role is to support with a complementary step—integrating analytical results with practical experience and packaging them into ready-to-use recipes and tools. In this way, we aim to contribute to addressing loneliness in Germany.

We are a member of the Global Initiative for Loneliness and Connection (GILC, www.gilc.global) and coordinate our activities with the other member institutions therein.

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