



# The moderating effects of Fear of Intimacy on Loneliness and Grief

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## INTRO

- Loneliness can be defined as emotional isolation, such as the absence of an attachment figure, or it can be defined as the secondary response social isolation where there is a severe disruption in a social role (Weiss 1973).
- Loneliness can be heightened when relationships lack in interpersonal connections. Experiencing complicated grief after a loss creates this discomfort in disclosing to others, hindering the building of future interpersonal relationships (Martin & Ashby, 2004).
- The purpose of this study is to understand how an individual's willingness to self-disclose impacts feelings of loneliness when one is grieving.

## METHODS

- Data was collected through a cross sectional survey administered through an online data collection tool. Data collected included demographic information, the Inventory of Complicated Grieving (ICG), the Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), and the UCLA Loneliness Scale v3 (UCLA).
- 126 undergraduate students from a medium sized university designated a Hispanic Serving Institute completed the survey. After removing individuals who did not answer all questions, 90 responses remained in the data set Full demographic information for the analyzed data is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1
- Data were analyzed using the SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) Model 1.

## RESULTS

- The overall model assessed was significant and accounted for approximately 30% of the variance in UCLA scores,  $F(3, 86) = 12.70, p < .001, R^2 = .3070$ . ICG ( $b = .9571, t(86) = 3.00, p = .004$ ), FIS ( $b = .3842, t(86) = 5.31, p < .001$ ), and the interaction effect ( $b = -.0097, t(86) = -2.47, p = .015$ ) were all significant predictors of UCLA scores. At one SD below the mean on FIS in the sample, FIS significantly impacted the relationship between ICG scores and UCLA scores  $t(86) = 3.36, p = .001, b = .426$ . At mean levels of FIS, the relationship remained significant but weakened  $t(86) = 2.11, p = .037, b = .185$ . At one standard deviation below the mean, the FIS no longer impacted the relationship between ICG and UCLA scores,  $t(86) = -0.56, p = .575, b = -.08$ .
- See Figure 2

## DISCUSSION

Findings suggest that individuals at low levels of FIS will not experience as much loneliness no matter their complicated grieving level. Whereas loneliness has traditionally proven to be an extremely difficult variable to move, FIS has demonstrated less rigidity and is commonly targeted in FAP interventions. These findings suggest that it may be beneficial for individuals who are demonstrating behaviors consistent with complicated grieving may benefit from interventions focusing on interpersonal relating. Given the low sample size and cross-sectional nature of the data, all findings should be interpreted with caution. Further investigation that utilizes experimental methods may elucidate how robust the findings are.

Across levels of complicated grieving individuals with low levels of fear of intimacy report less loneliness. No differences were found in individuals with high fear of intimacy

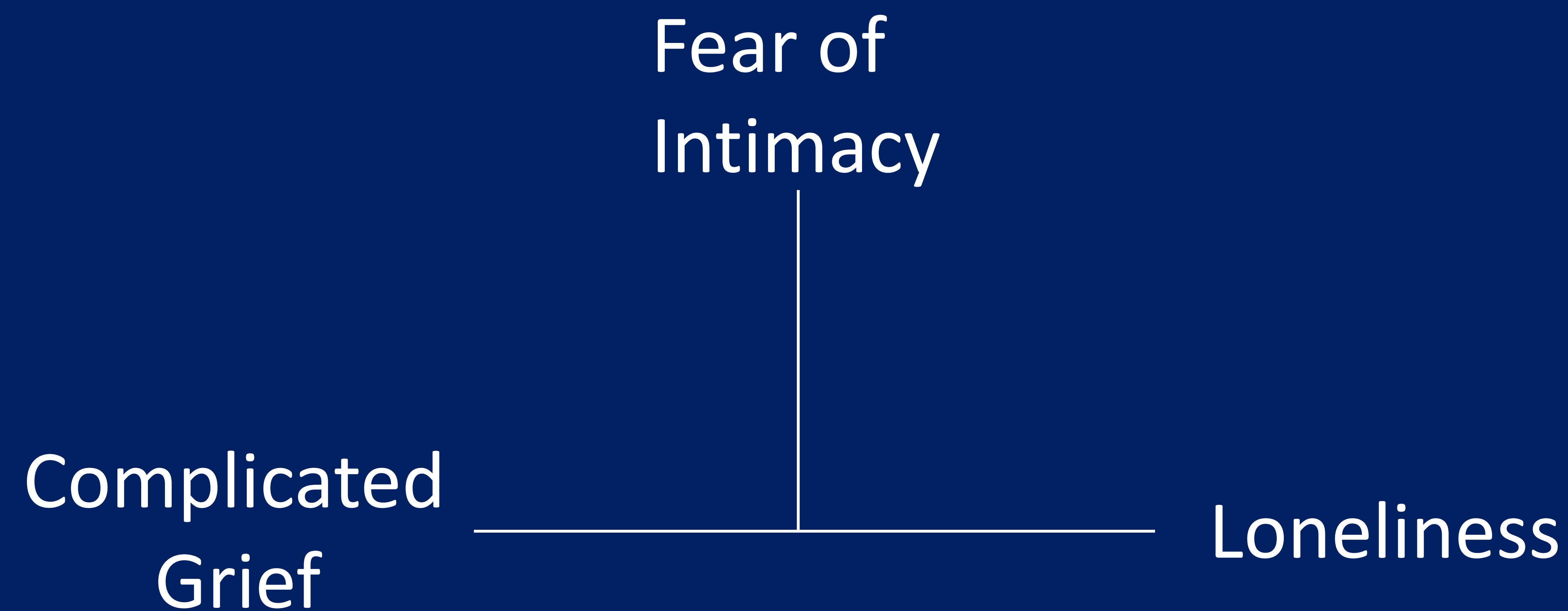


Figure 1  
Racial identity of study sample

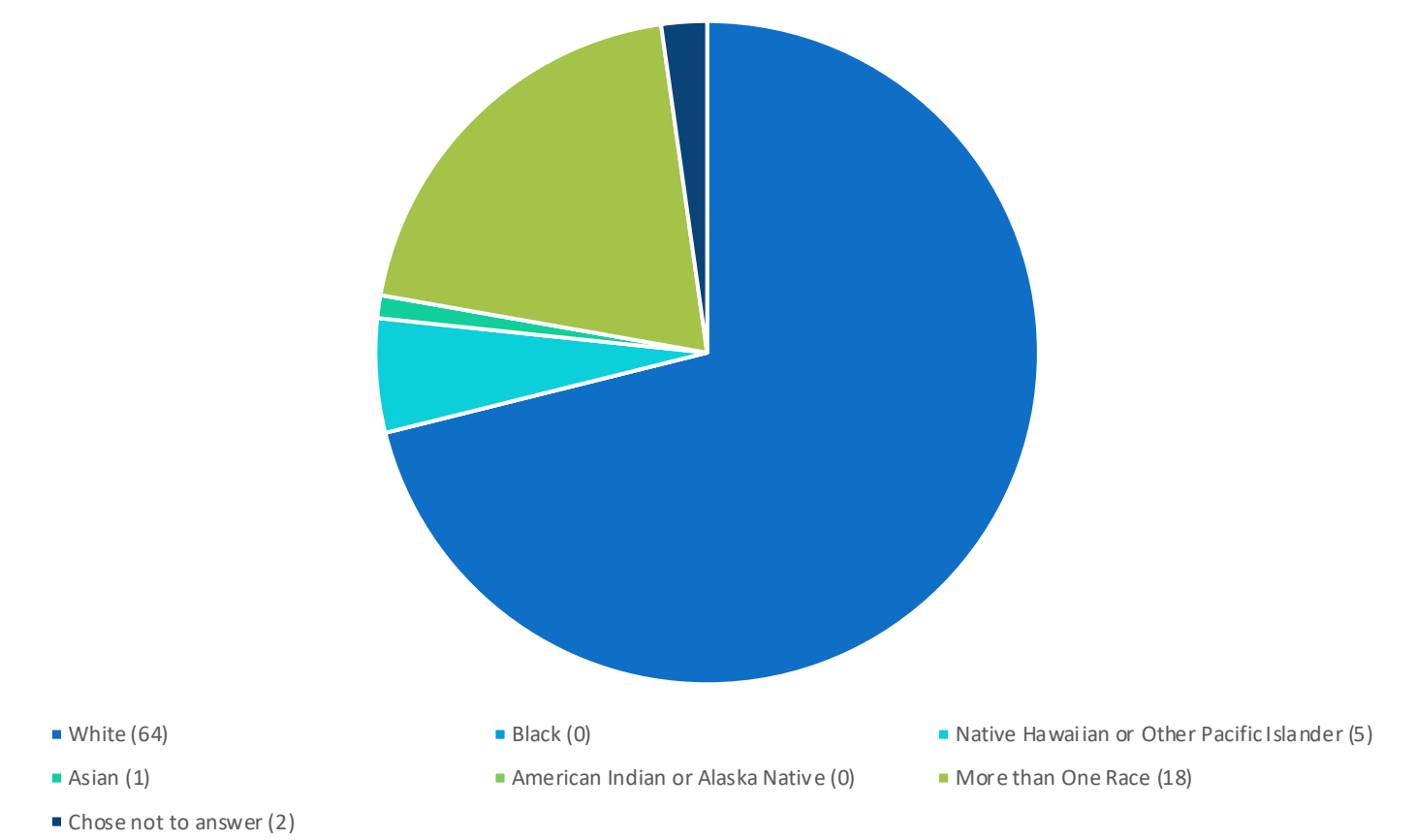


Figure 2  
Moderating effect of FIS on the relationship between Complicated grieving and loneliness

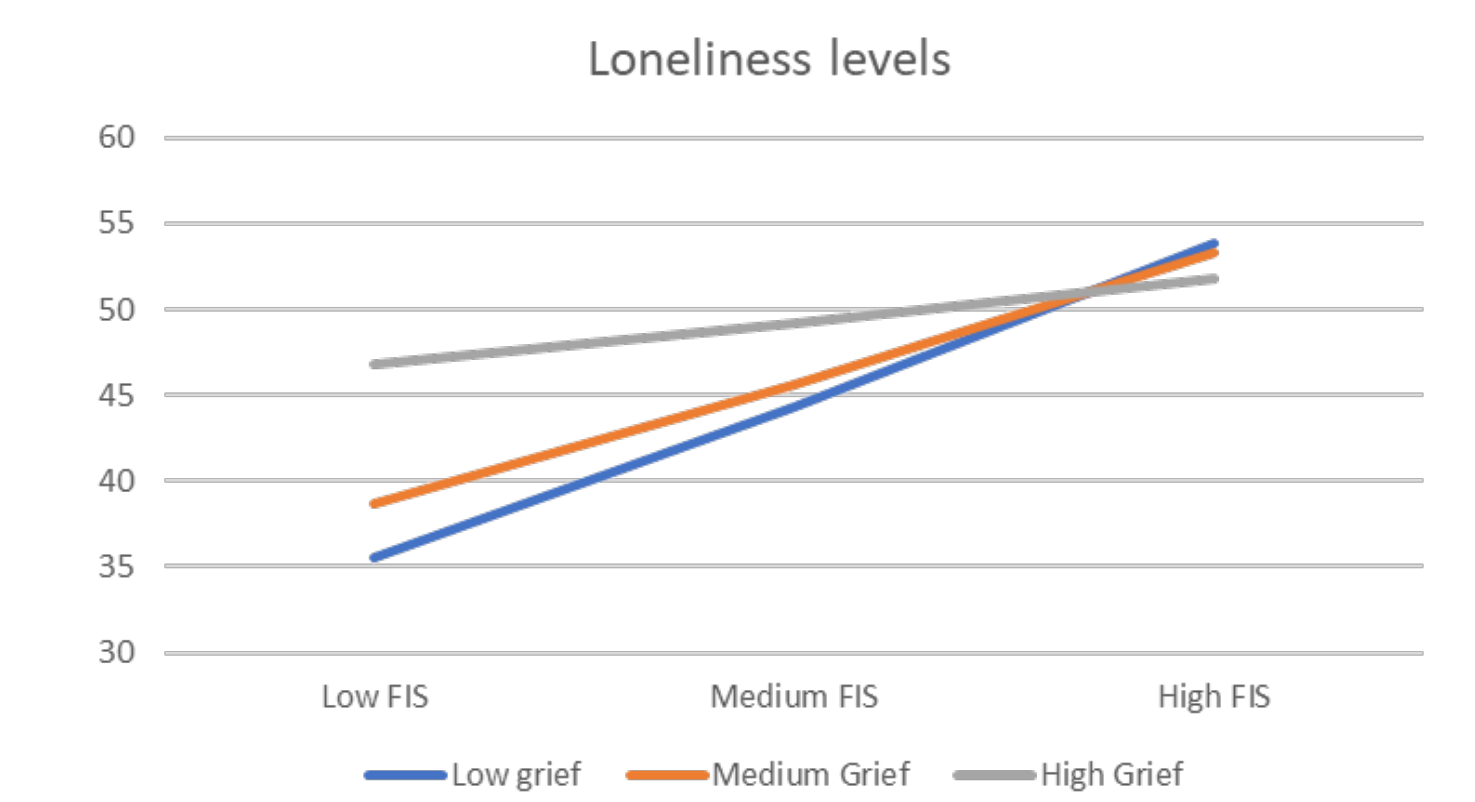


Table 1  
Demographic information of study sample

Variable	
Age	22.61 (5.99)
Gender	12 Male, 77 Female, 1 Non-binary
Ethnicity	54 Latinx, 36 Non-Latinx

## References

- Hayes, A.F. (2018) Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach. New York, NY: Ebook The Guilford Press.
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- Weiss, R.S. (1973). *Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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