

Rank and Salutogenesis:

A Quantitative and Empirical Study of Self-Rated

Health and Perceived Social Status

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ABSTRACT

This study consisted of a quantitative survey of the relationship between self-rated health, subjective rank, Antonovsky's sense of coherence and objective measures of social status. For the measure of subjective rank Mindell's multidimensional concept of rank was used, which includes social dimensions as well as non-materially based elements of community integration and self-esteem. Subjective rank relies on the individual's own perception of his or her social standing in the various areas of social comparison. A questionnaire was developed that operationalizes the concept of rank into this new measure of subjective rank. Subjective rank was then compared to objective measures of socioeconomic status (SES), Antonovsky's sense of coherence (SOC), and self-rated physical health. The study sample reflected 133 U.S. and 59 Swiss participants of Lava Rock Seminars which address psychological and physical needs related to chronic illness. The author hypothesized that the measure of subjective rank would be more sensitive in predicting health than SOC and objective SES. Findings showed that subjective rank was significantly related to self-rated health among both groups. It explained 31% of the variance in self-reported health among the U.S. sample. In a multiple regression analysis of the U.S. sample, SOC and objective SES became non-significant predictors once subjective rank was entered. The range of social status of participants in both samples was restricted, which limits the conclusions about the relative association of subjective and objective social status with health. Nevertheless, these results are consistent with the assumption that perceived rank dominates the effect on self-reported health. They suggest that low perceived rank is linked to greater stress by either increasing stress directly or

increasing the vulnerability to the effect of stress. These results demonstrate that rank has a considerable impact on subjective health. This study positions Mindell's concepts of rank within a larger academic discourse of power and privilege. Further, by integrating newer concepts based on Antonovsky's 'Salutogenesis' and Mindell's ideas on rank, this study contributes to a change of our attitude toward illness and deviance.

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