Mental Health Issues Growing Among High School and College Students

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More high school and college students are reporting struggles with anxiety and depression today than in previous years, according to a study to be published in a future issue of *Clinical Psychology Review* and reported by Boston.com.

Researchers have been surveying high school and college students regularly about their mental health since the 1930s, using a popular psychological survey called the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI).

To determine whether the rate of mental health issues among students is rising or falling, Jean Twenge, PhD, from San Diego State University analyzed data from MMPI surveys going back to 1938.

Twenge found that students surveyed in 2007 were five times as likely to report symptoms of mental health problems in one or more categories of the MMPI, compared with students surveyed in 1938. The percentage of students reporting symptoms of hypomania, which includes unrealistic optimism and anxiety, increased from 5 to 31 percent. Those reporting symptoms of depression increased from 1 to 6 percent.

Twenge makes the point that with so many more students taking psychiatric medication today than in the past, the rates of these disorders is likely even greater than she found in her analysis. Twenge ventures that a key factor behind the rise in mental health problems is the increase in students' concerns about achieving external signs of success, such as beauty and wealth.

Richard Shadick, a psychologist who directs the student counseling center at Pace University in New York City, told Yahoo News that he has some skepticism of the study because the students surveyed don't necessarily fully represent the entire student body. He does, however, acknowledge that in recent years more students have sought counseling.

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