

Loneliness Among Older Sexual and Gender Minority Adults

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Living with Pride Benefit
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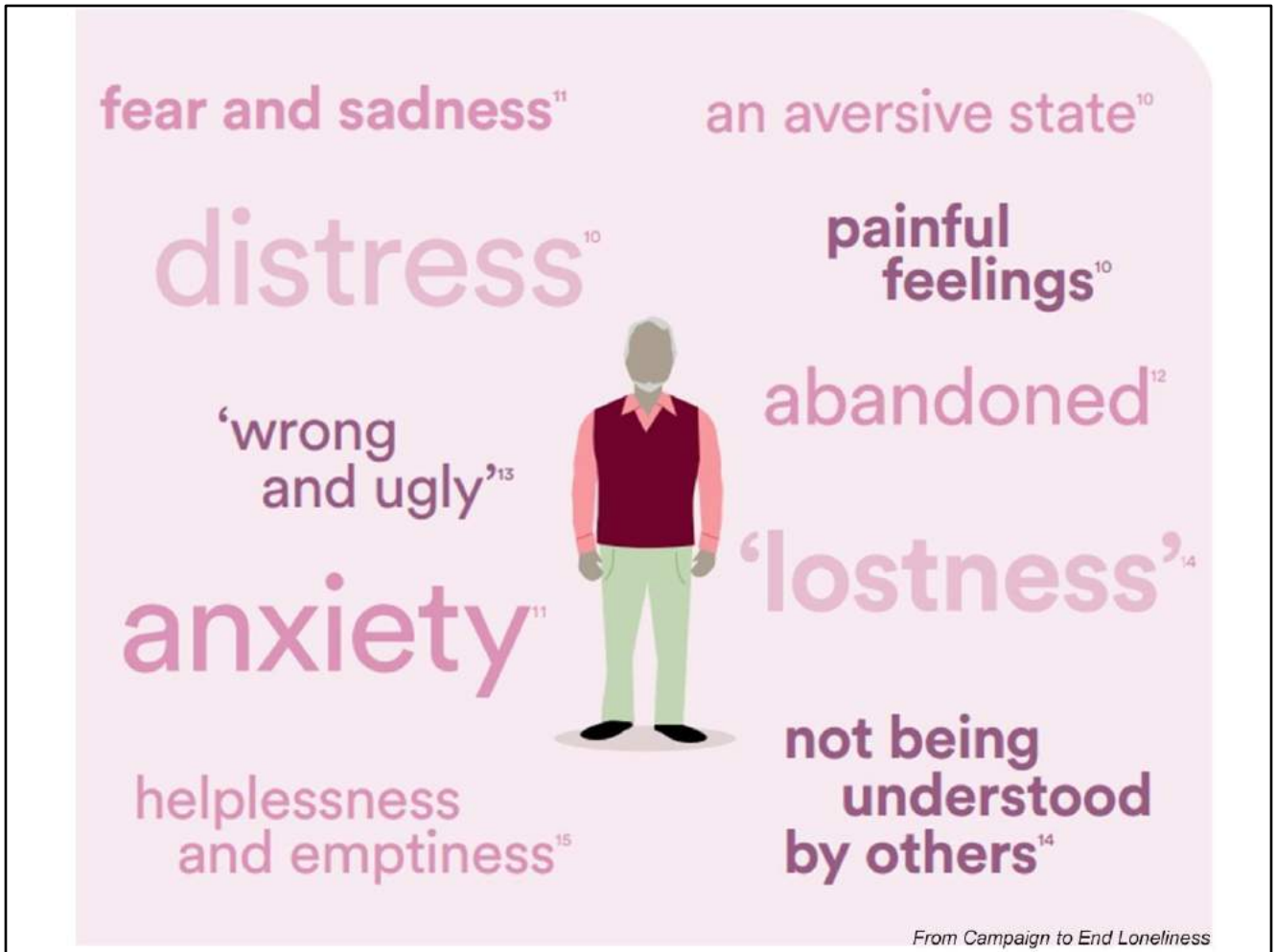
- This presentation was given at the Living with Pride Benefit at Vancouver's Westin Bayshore Hotel on March 1, 2024. www.livingwithpride.ca
- The first half of the presentation is about loneliness in general.
- The second half is about loneliness among older sexual and gender minority adults.
- Some slides have been added or updated since the March presentation.
- This document is for personal use only and is not yet final.

What is Loneliness?



- Mismatch between desired and actual relationships
 - quantity
 - quality (most important)
- Subjective
 - can feel lonely by yourself, in a group, or in a relationship
- Emotional pain that evolved to a serve purpose
 - like hunger, thirst, physical pain

- Loneliness tells us when our basic human needs are not being met and motivates us to take corrective action.



- People describe a variety of distressing thoughts and feelings when they are lonely.
- Recommended report: *The Psychology of Loneliness* from Campaign to End Loneliness, 2020.

Exhibit 1: Social and Physical Pain Produce Similar Brain Responses

Brain scans captured through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) show the same areas associated with distress, whether caused by social rejection or physical pain. The dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (highlighted at left) is associated with the degree of distress; the right ventral prefrontal cortex (highlighted at right) is associated with regulating the distress.

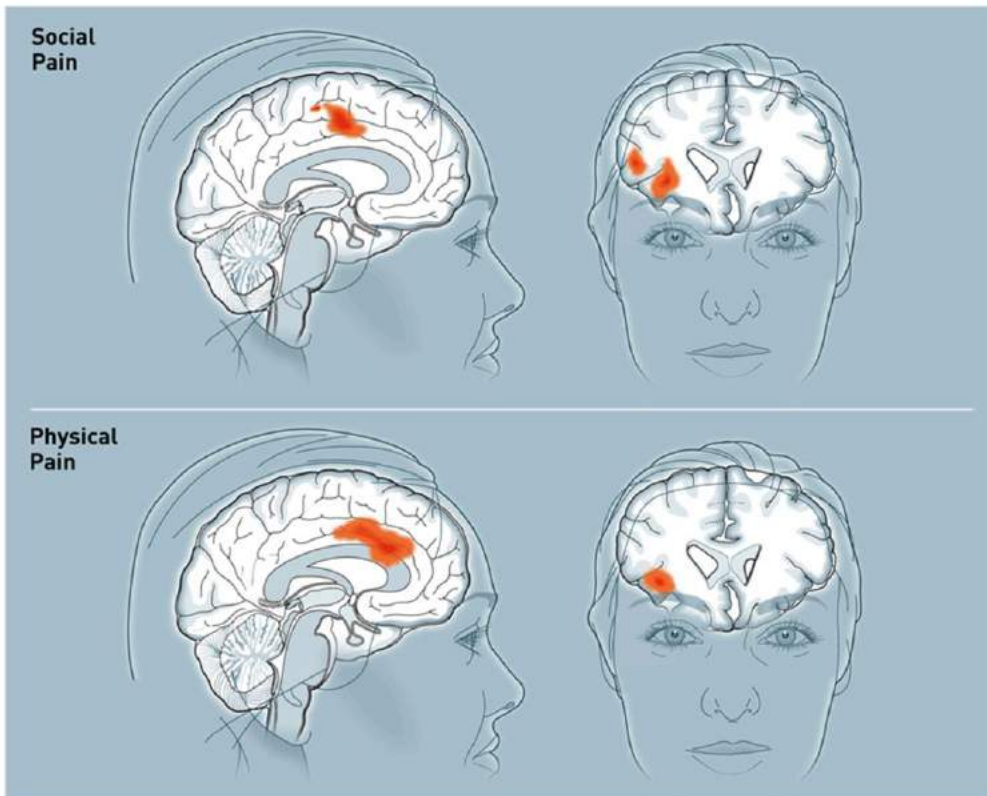


Illustration: Samuel Valasco

Source: Eisenberger, Lieberman, and Williams, *Science*, 2003 [social pain images]; Lieberman et al., "The Neural Correlates of Placebo Effects: A Disruption Account," *Neuroimage*, May 2004 [physical pain images]

- We see here evidence for the deep evolutionary roots of loneliness and other forms of social pain like rejection or grief. There is an overlap in brain regions that process social and physical pain. Given the importance of social connection for our species' survival, our brains evolved to treat social threats or deficits with the same urgency as physical threats.
- There is also some evidence that taking acetaminophen can relieve social pain (Dewall et al., 2020, *Psychological Science*).

Loneliness and Isolation

**Vulnerable:
Isolated and Lonely**

**Lonely But Not
Isolated**

**Isolated But Not
Lonely**

**Majority: Neither
Isolated Nor Lonely**

- As I mentioned earlier, loneliness can be related to isolation but is not synonymous with it.
- Vulnerable group may be easiest to help: if you can reduce their isolation, you can reduce their loneliness (provided that they have not fallen into the negative feedback loop that I will describe shortly).
- Lonely but not isolated group: loneliness may be caused/compounded by mental health problems, stigma, etc. Psychological approaches (e.g., interpersonal therapy, CBT) may be more helpful for this group.
- Isolated but not lonely group may be fairing well now, but may find themselves feeling isolated when they lose their independence and require support from others.
- See Newall & Menec (2017, *JSPR*); Menec et al. (2020, *PLoS One*).

**“I used to think
the worst thing
in life was to
end up all
alone. It's not.
The worst thing
in life is to end
up with people
that make you
feel alone.”**



- The late Robin Williams aptly described how loneliness is more than just being alone.

Loneliness is most painful not
when we are alone but when
we are misunderstood, rejected,
ostracized, or ignored by the
people around us.

Esther Perel



Types of Loneliness



Intimate



Social



Collective



Existential

- Important to distinguish type of loneliness because they have different risk factors and may require different strategies.
- Intimate loneliness: perceived absence of a close intimate tie, like a partner or best friend.
- Social loneliness: perceived absence of a broader social network of friends, family, etc.
- Collective loneliness: perceived absence of belonging to a larger group or cause, like a religious community or team of some sort.
- Existential loneliness: a sense of isolation that results from the realization that no one can fully comprehend one's deepest thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It is a fundamental sense of aloneness even in the presence of intimate ties. It can be especially acute at end of life.



Downward spiral

Loneliness can lead to a loss of confidence and make people withdraw from others.

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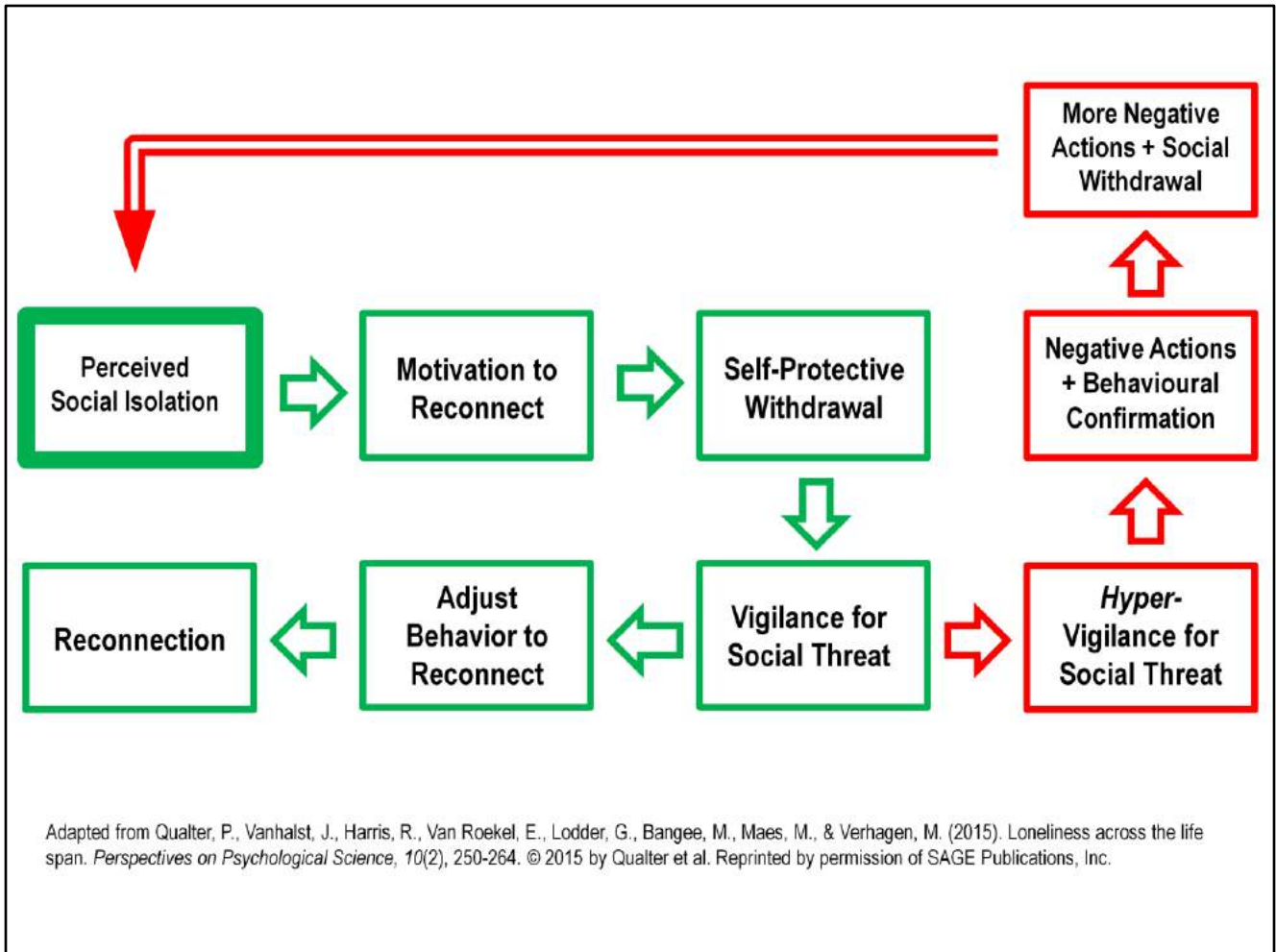
If left unchecked, this can lead to chronic loneliness which is harder to tackle.

3

This can set off a downward spiral of more negative thoughts and despair.

2





- Usually, loneliness is time-limited as it serves its purpose of motivating social reconnection.
- But for some, it can become persistent, in part due to a negative feedback loop.
- When feeling isolated from others, we are motivated to reconnect, but cautiously. We withdraw a little bit in order to re-assess the situation. We also become a little more sensitive to further social threats (e.g., rejection).
- But some people become hyper-vigilant for social threats and withdraw excessively. They focus too much on the negative aspects of social interactions and start to misinterpret neutral or ambiguous social cues as threatening. This is common for people who are chronically isolated or who have experienced a lot of stigma and rejection in the past.
- These perceptions may cause them to unwittingly push others away.
- This, in turn, leads to negative reactions from others, reinforcing the lonely person's negative beliefs about people. This leads to further withdrawal and loneliness.
- Notably, this cycle causes chronic stress and, eventually, various health problems.
- See Qualter et al. (2015, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*).

Emotional Impact of Loneliness



- Loss of self-esteem
- Anxiety, including social anxiety
- Atrophy of social skills
- Depression
- Anger and aggression
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal ideation, self-harm
- All compounded by
 - feeling like a burden
 - shame of loneliness itself

- Anger and aggression: especially in men; may even be the only sign that they are lonely.
- Relationships likely bidirectional. For example, loneliness can cause depression, but depression can also cause loneliness (due to its negative impact on social cognition).
- There is also an intense shame surrounding loneliness because people perceive it as a personal failure—like the problem is exclusively caused by the individual, rather than being an understandable reaction to social stress, including real and perceived isolation due to social stigma and discrimination.

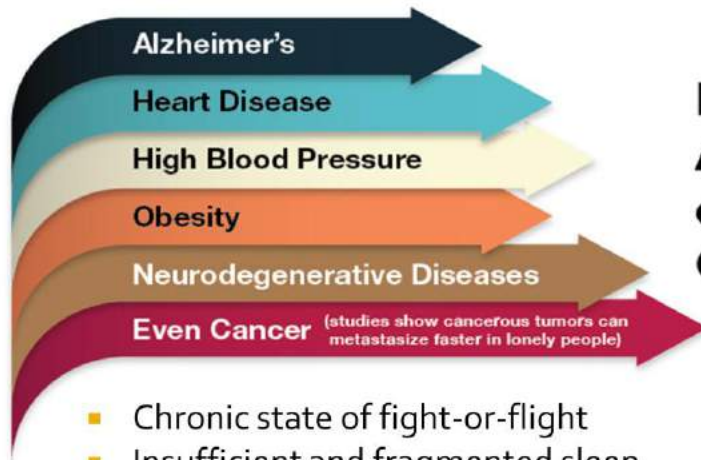
Behavioural Impact of Loneliness



- Emotional dysregulation
- Impulsivity
- Poor health habits
 - overeating, especially carbohydrates
 - physical inactivity
 - riskier sexual behaviour
 - self-neglect
- Poor medication adherence
- Substance misuse

- As loneliness is stressful, it puts an extra load on our brain's executive functions, leading to lack of control over our emotions.
- This can impact self-care.

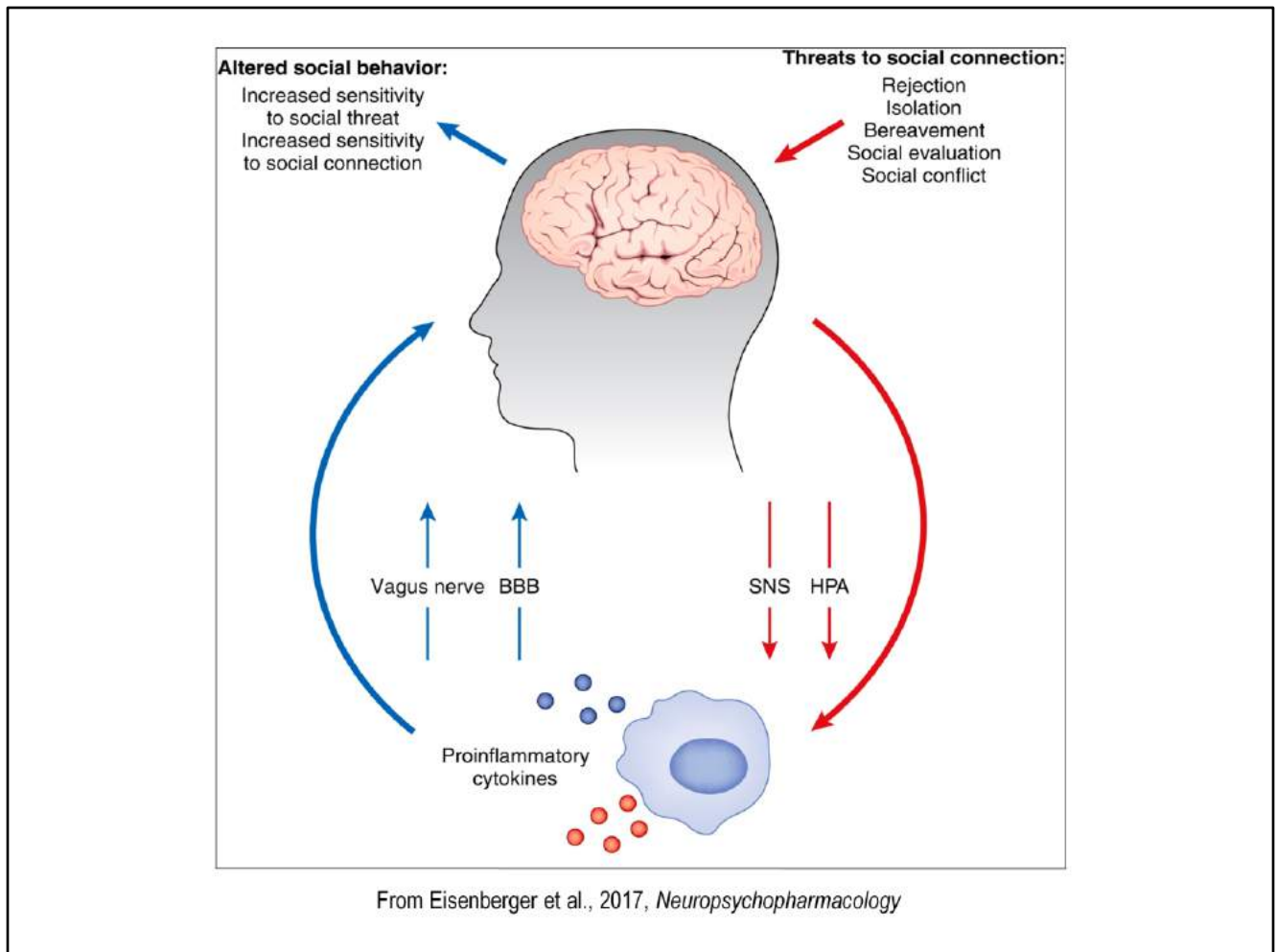
Physical Impact of Loneliness



Diseases & Medical Ailments Caused or Worsened by Chronic Loneliness

- Chronic state of fight-or-flight
- Insufficient and fragmented sleep
- Immune dysfunction
- Chronic inflammation
- Accelerated aging
- Earlier mortality

- The chronic stress of loneliness, plus its impact on health behaviour, likely explains why it is a risk factor for many physical ailments.
- Insufficient sleep: sleeping with one eye open, unconsciously monitoring for social threats.
- Poor sleep also causes many of these health issues, including immune dysfunction and inflammation, which is a known risk factor for many health problems.
- Notably, poor sleep can also cause/exacerbate loneliness due to its impact on mood, social cognition, and social behaviour (see Simon & Walker, 2018, *Nature Communications*).
- Due to all of these health outcomes, loneliness is a known risk for accelerated aging and earlier mortality.



- This diagram is based on research suggesting that threats to social connection (e.g., loneliness, isolation, rejection, bereavement, social evaluation, and social conflict) can produce pro-inflammatory cytokines that increase our sensitivity to further social threats.
- See also Matthews et al. (2024, *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*).

ARTICLE

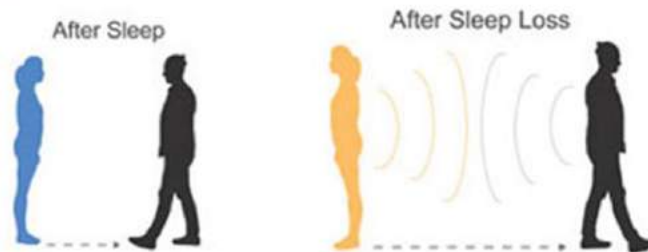
DOI: 10.1038/s41467-018-05377-0

OPEN

Sleep loss causes social withdrawal and loneliness

Eti Ben Simon¹ & Matthew P. Walker^{1,2}

Loneliness and social isolation markedly increase mortality risk, and are linked to numerous mental and physical comorbidities, including sleep disruption. But does sleep loss causally trigger loneliness? Here, we demonstrate that a lack of sleep leads to a neural and behavioral phenotype of social withdrawal and loneliness; one that can be perceived by other members of society, and reciprocally, makes those societal members lonelier in return. We propose a model in which sleep loss instigates a propagating, self-reinforcing cycle of social separation and withdrawal.



- Viewers rated sleep-deprived people as more lonely.
- They also felt more lonely themselves! Feeling and looking lonely induces it in others.
- Further evidence for the contagion effect of loneliness.

Social Impact of Loneliness



International Journal of Public Health
ORIGINAL RESEARCH
published: 02 February 2021
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Does Loneliness Have a Cost? A Population-Wide Study of the Association Between Loneliness and Healthcare Expenditure

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- Decreased productivity
- Increased healthcare use and expenditures
- Admission to long-term care
- Negative perception of neighbourhoods
- Reduced feelings of safety, trust, and social cohesion
- Loneliness “contagion”

- Loneliness can spread within social networks by affecting how we perceive and treat one another. Those on the periphery of social networks are the most affected (Cacioppo, Fowler, & Christakis, 2009, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*).

Loneliness is now a 'global public health concern,' says WHO



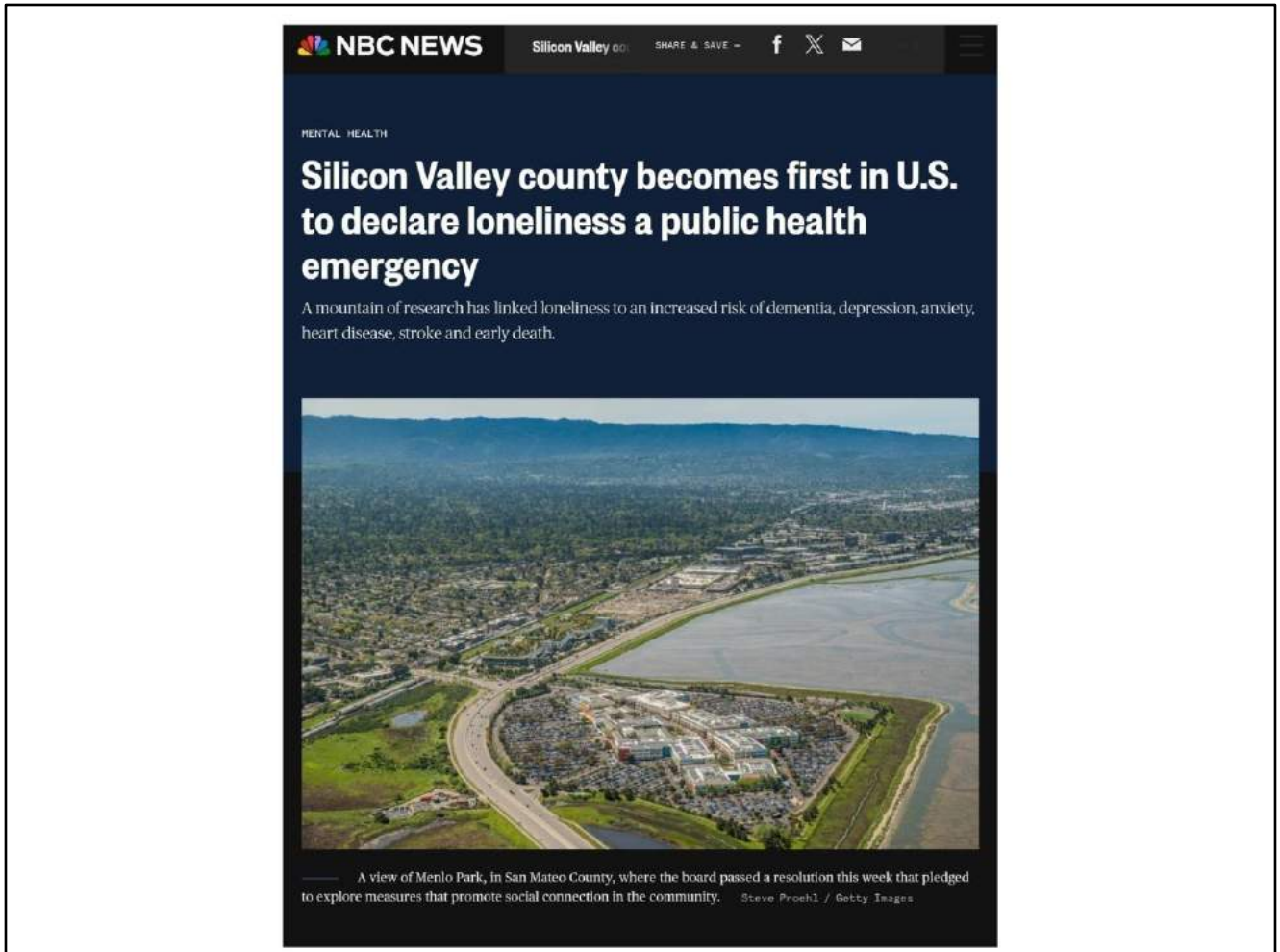
By **Sarah Do Couto** · Global News

Posted November 16, 2023 11:40 am · Updated November 16, 2023 11:41 am · 2 min read



The World Health Organization (WHO) Wednesday announced the Leaders Commission on Social Connection. – Nov 15, 2023

- Loneliness is such a strong risk for health and social problems that the WHO has declared it a global public health concern.




- Some cities have declared loneliness a public health emergency.

☰ 🔍 **BBC** Register Sign In

Minister for loneliness appointed to continue Jo Cox's work

17 January 2018 Share



A minister for loneliness, a project first started by the late MP Jo Cox, has been announced by Downing Street.

Tracey Crouch said she was proud to take on the "generational challenge" to tackle an issue affecting about nine million UK people, young and old.

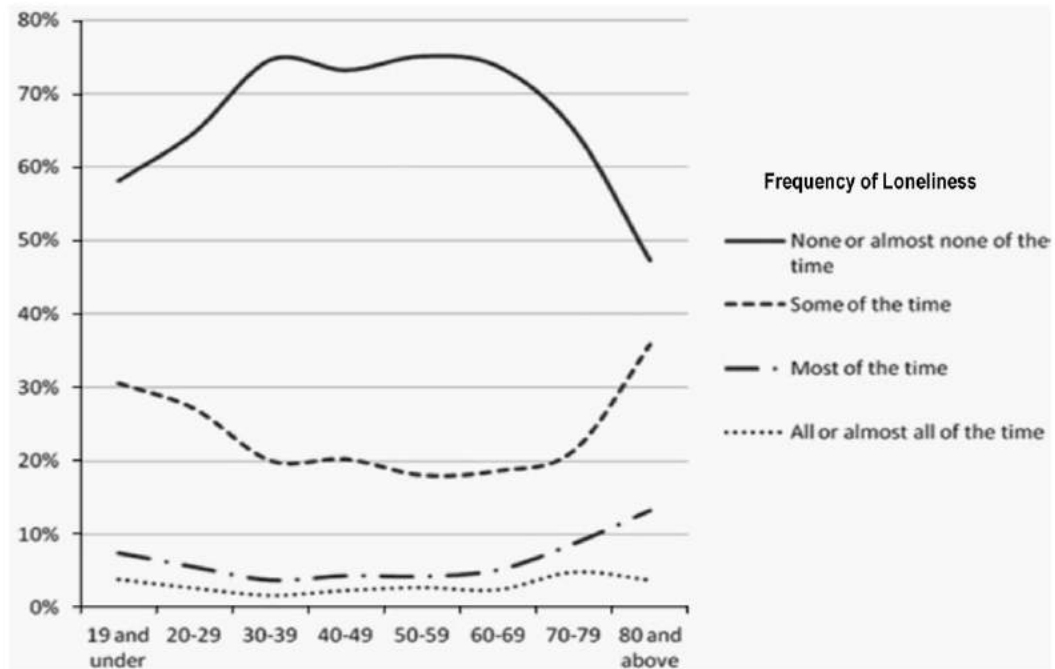
The 42-year-old said she would work across political parties in the role.

The Commission on Loneliness was first set up by Ms Cox, who was killed before the EU referendum.

A 2017 report said loneliness was as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

- The UK government was one of the first to take this problem seriously and even appointed a "Minister of Loneliness" in 2018.
- See "The Loneliness Bureau" (*New Statesman*, January 2024).

Loneliness and Age



Yang & Victor (2011). Age and loneliness in 25 European nations. *Ageing and Society*, 31(8), 1368-1388.

- Despite the previous image showing an elderly person, we should remember that loneliness can happen to anyone, with the highest rates among younger people and the oldest-old.
- In fact, younger people today are lonelier than previous generations of younger people.
- Recent studies have found a more nuanced relationship between age and loneliness, but there still appears to be a U-shaped curve.

Sexual and Gender Minorities



- Many are resilient and have healthy, satisfying relationships
- But more likely than heterosexual seniors to be
 - isolated and lonely
 - afraid of having no caregivers
 - afraid of dying alone
- Bisexual and transgender seniors at greatest risk
- Three broad risk factors
 - sociodemographics
 - marginalization/invisibility
 - minority stress

Demographic Factors



- Smaller pool of potential partners
- More likely to be single and unmarried (men especially)
- Less likely to have children
- More likely to be estranged from families of origin
- Lower socioeconomic status
- Greater disability

- Evidence for the relationship between loneliness and SES comes mostly from other countries. Canada does not yet have much data on this, at least for older sexual and gender minorities.
- Some sexual orientation groups tend to have lower SES (e.g., lesbians; bisexuals).

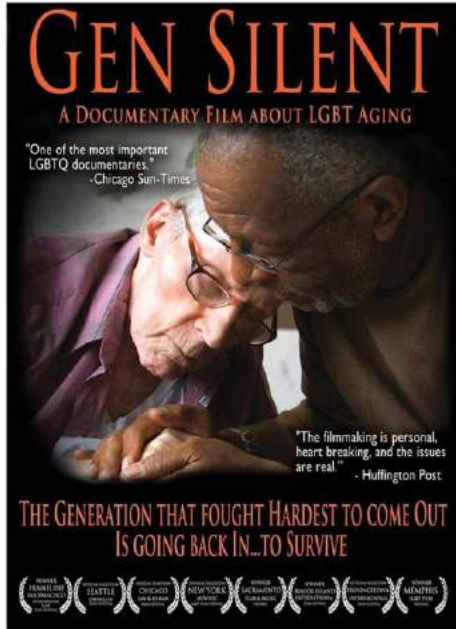
Living Arrangements



- More likely to live alone, even when partnered (especially men)
- More likely to live with someone other than a partner
- Implications for
 - attachment and feelings of belonging
 - social resources
 - quality of support
 - coping with stigma
- Greater housing insecurity
 - lower income
 - housing discrimination

- Some may live alone to reduce exposure to stigma.
- Living with a partner may provide a more intimate, secure, and stable relationship.
- Those living with a partner also have more opportunities to do things together and not experience the stress of hiding their sexual orientation or relationship.
- Quality of support received from living with others, like friends or family, may not be as strong as that received from a live-in partner.
- Easier to cope with stigma when you have the support of a live-in partner.
- For more info on loneliness and living arrangement, see Kim & Fredriksen-Goldsen (2016, *The Gerontologist*).
- Housing discrimination: co-ops and stratas may not be very welcoming. Many residents have chosen non-kin family members they would like to live with, but they are not legally recognized. So the residents may be accused of overcrowding.
- Due to lower SES, some may be forced to leave neighbourhoods where they have developed lifelong relationships.

Invisibility in Care Settings



- Ignored or dismissed
 - “We don’t have people like that here.”
 - “It’s not our business.”
 - “Residents will be offended if you ask.”
- Tolerating but not affirming
 - No visible signs or gestures of inclusion
 - Disinterest in SGM experiences
 - No attempt to help integrate with others
- Chosen families not recognized
- Benign neglect
- Self-silencing, returning to closet

- Invisibility in care is another big issue, which featured prominently in the documentary *Gen Silent* (highly recommend watching).
- I have worked with organizations that have been resistant to my suggestion to ask about sexual orientation in surveys about residents’ well-being. Their reasoning is that the question would offend residents or make them suspicious. My response was that LGBTQ residents might be offended that nobody cared to know about their experiences, or even cared to know about their presence in the facility.
- In some facilities, staff might make no attempt to monitor cliques, which seem to be everywhere and at all ages!
- Benign neglect: thinking that you are doing the right thing and being respectful by minding your own business not paying attention to the unique experiences and challenges of sexual and gender minority residents.
- This can be profoundly isolating and invalidating and make a person feel like they are unimportant and do not exist.
- In some cases, LGBTQ residents might also be afraid of being harassed or abused by staff or other residents.

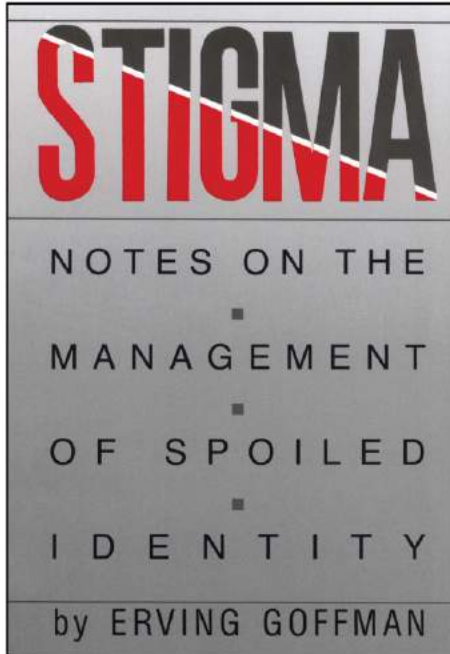


- I think there is a prevailing attitude that older people, including those in the LGBTQ community, lack sexual desire or should not express it because it is 'inappropriate'.
- This invalidates their experiences and deprives them of a fundamental source of social connection and happiness.



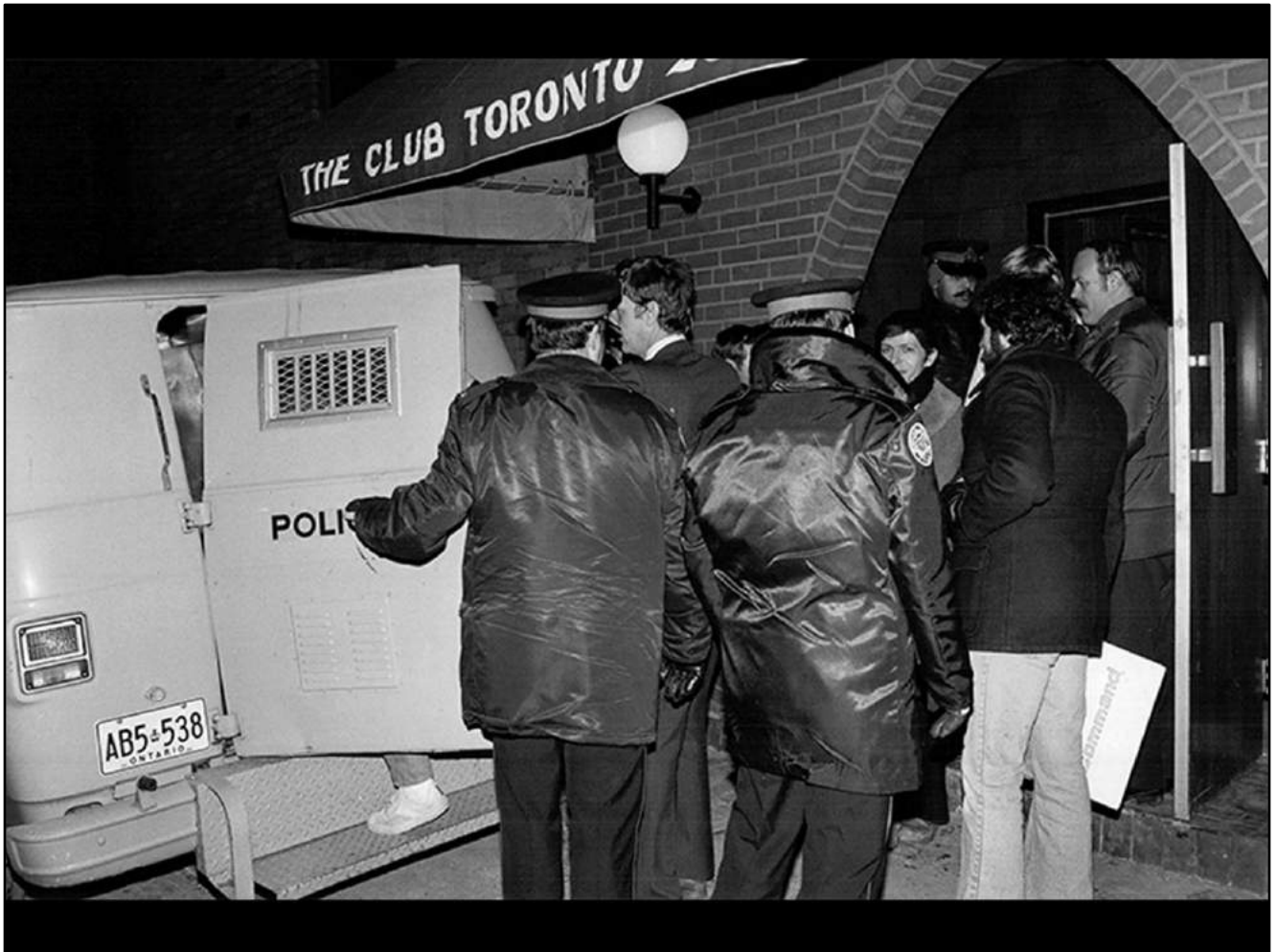
- We should reduce barriers to partnered living arrangements.

Minority Stress



- Cumulative stress of living with a stigmatized identity
- Distal stress
 - current and past discrimination, harassment, or violence
 - intra-minority stress (e.g., ageism within LGBTQ community)
- Proximal stress
 - concealment
 - internalized stigma
 - rejection sensitivity

- Minority stress is another risk factor for loneliness in older sexual and gender minority adults.
- Rejection sensitivity: tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to social rejection, even if it is not present.



- Despite being a more progressive country, Canada has a long history of LGBTQ discrimination.
- Many SGM older adults came of age when same-sex behaviour was highly stigmatized and criminalized, as we saw with the raids of gay establishments from the late 60s until as recently as 2004.

a TELUS original

GROSS INDECENCY: THE EVERETT KLIPPERT STORY

SPOTLIGHT PRODUCTIONS TELUS ORIGINAL PRESENTS GROSS INDECENCY: THE EVERETT KLIPPERT STORY
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Court, ruling on homosexual shocks MPs

Some Members of Parliament reacted to a Supreme Court ruling yesterday that would make every practising homosexual in Canada liable to life imprisonment by demanding a change in the law.

The court in a 3 to 2 decision upheld a lower court ruling and dismissed an appeal by Everett George Klippert a 40-year-old mechanic sentenced in 1965 to an indefinite period of detention as a dangerous sexual offender.

'Victims of unfortunate disease'

Bud Orange (L-Northwest Territories) who raised the subject in the Commons referred to homosexuals as "victims of an unfortunate social disease."

Outside the house, Mr. Orange said he favored the British law, recently enacted, which legalizes homosexuality between consenting adults.

Gordon Fairweather (PC-Royal), a former attorney-general of New Brunswick, said: "I follow Orange. The preventive detention business is an aspect that disturbs me. We should take a careful look at the British law."

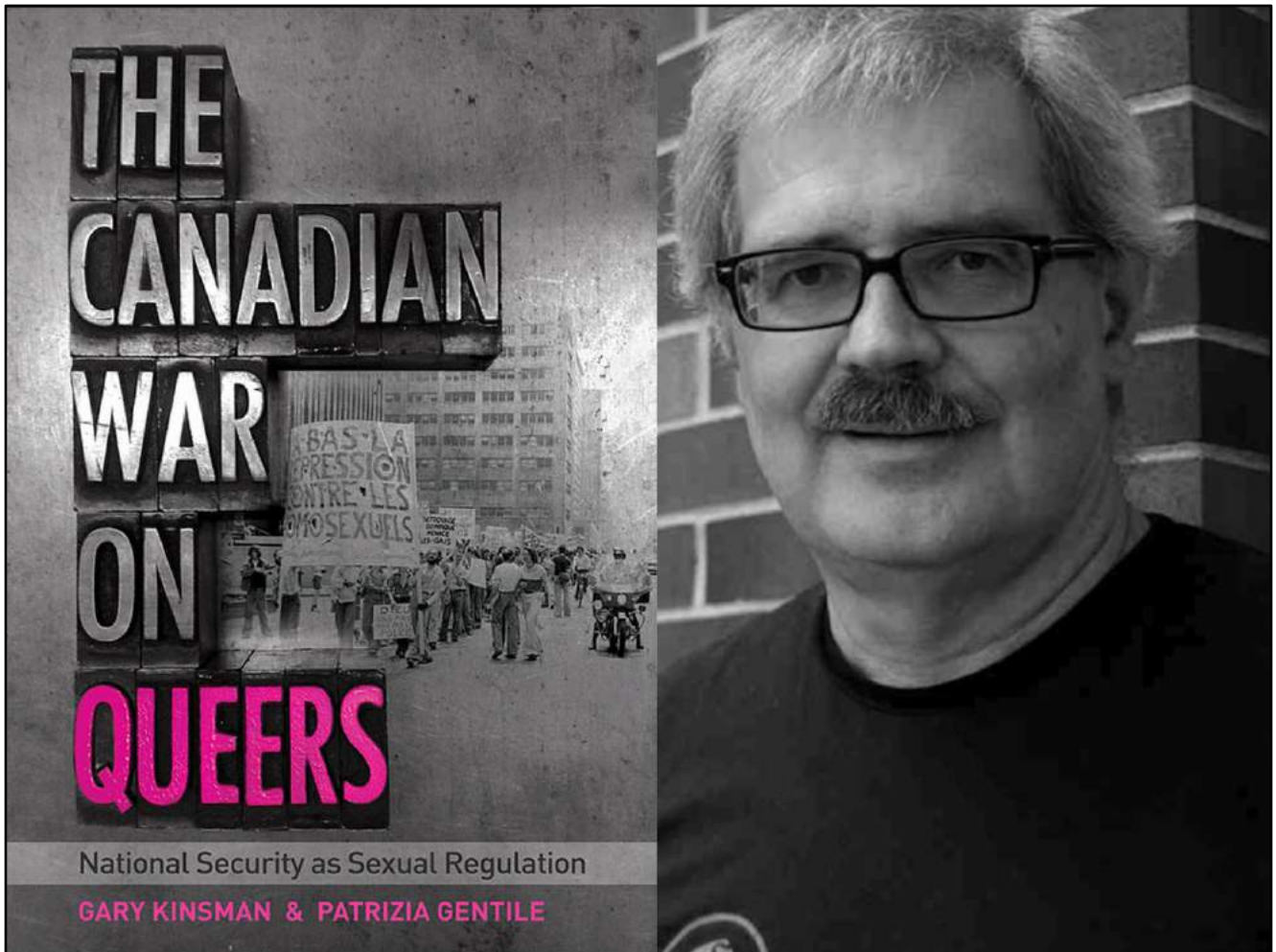
Senator David Walker (PC-Toronto-Rosedale), a former cabinet minister, said: "It is a shocking proposal. We don't want to become as degraded as some others."

G. E. D. Baldwin (PC-Peace River) said he thought the law should be looked at, but he agreed with Herber Smith (PC-Simcoe North) that the case cited by Mr. Orange was a prime example of hard cases making bad law.

Mr. Fairweather said he understood Ev Klippert, the man under the preventive detention sentence, was being questioned by police on another subject when he blurted out "I'm a homosexual." This led to his prosecution and subsequent sentence as a confirmed criminal.

Was convicted on four charges

- Up until 1969, LGBT Canadians could be imprisoned for the crime of 'gross indecency', which was vaguely defined.
- Most prominent example: George Everett Klippert. In 1966, he was declared a dangerous sexual offender after admitting to consensual sex with several men. He was given an indeterminate sentence on the grounds he was likely to have sex with men if released. The conviction was upheld by the Supreme Court.
- He was released in 1971 after the government decriminalized homosexual acts between consenting adults.



- There were also the Gay Purges from the 1950s to 90s, when people suspected of homosexuality were expelled from the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, and civil service under the pretext of national security concerns.
- They government saw homosexuality as a 'character defect' and believed that LGBT people could be targets for blackmail by the Soviets.
- Investigations were intensive and involved extreme questioning tactics. People were often forced to confess, spy on their co-workers, and identify others who might be 'security threats' based on their sexual orientation.

David Morton said he wants assurances that the Kemano project can proceed unimpeded or the company will sue to recoup the \$500-million it has spent already.

ground if we had not had an agreement which turns out not to be an agreement."

He said Alcan's shareholders want to know what will happen to the "\$500-million invested in

Nechako River in south-central B.C. last May after the Federal Court of Canada ordered a full environmental review. Alcan is awaiting the outcome of an appeal heard by the Federal Court of Appeal in February.

Mounties staged massive hunt for gay males in civil service

Police kept files on 8,200 during Diefenbaker-Pearson era

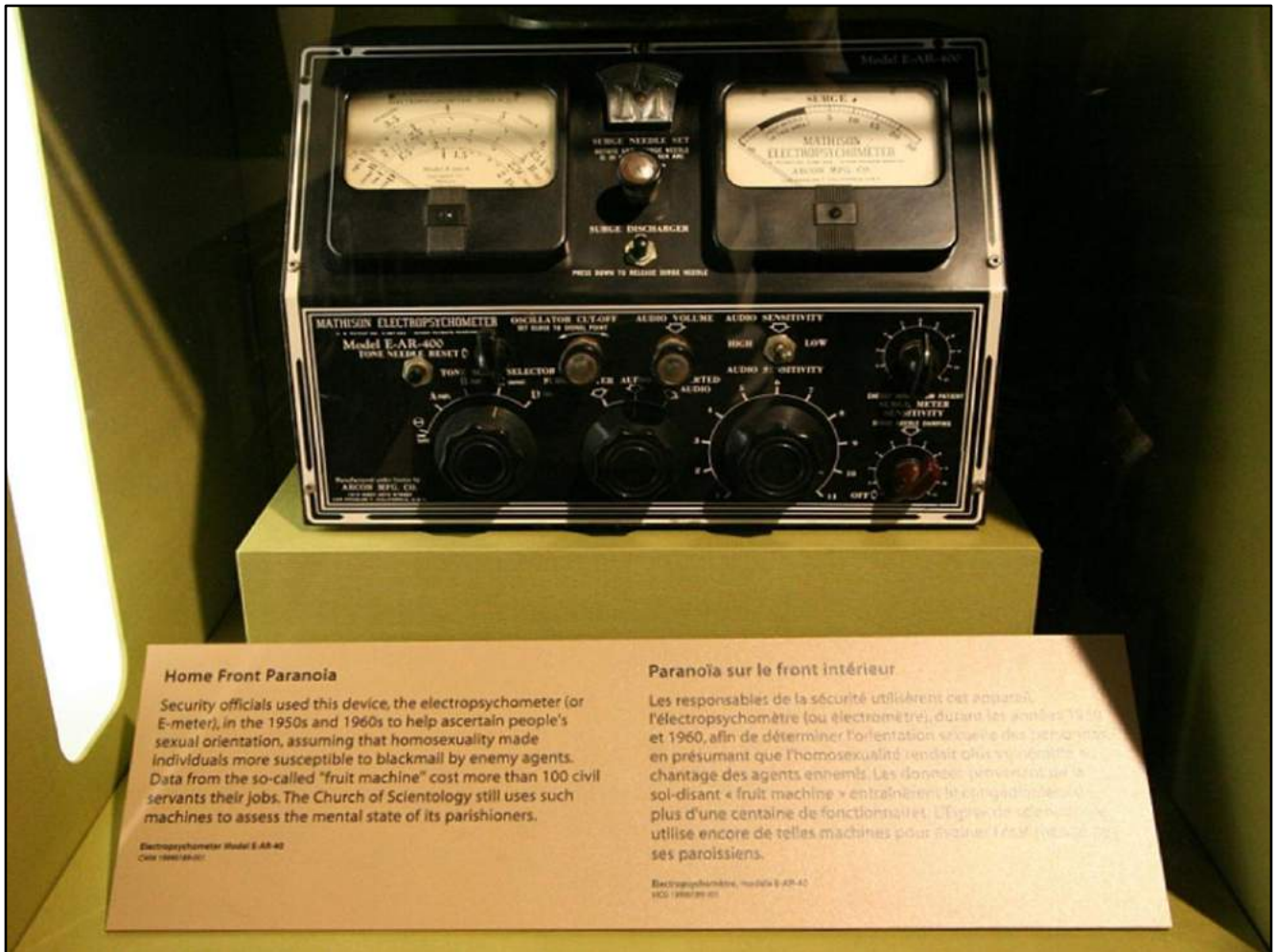
By DEAN BEEBY
The Canadian Press

The RCMP launched a massive hunt for male homosexuals in 1959 that identified 8,200 individuals by the late 1960s and led

relied on unidentified sources, but now the federal government for the first time has released documentation. The material, obtained by The Canadian Press

The RCMP Security Service knew of at least one clerk at the Canadian embassy in Moscow who was photographed by the KGB in a homosexual act.

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Home Front Paranoia

Security officials used this device, the electropsychometer (or E-meter), in the 1950s and 1960s to help ascertain people's sexual orientation, assuming that homosexuality made individuals more susceptible to blackmail by enemy agents. Data from the so-called "fruit machine" cost more than 100 civil servants their jobs. The Church of Scientology still uses such machines to assess the mental state of its parishioners.

Electropsychometer Model E-AR-40
 Date 1965/09/07

Paranoïa sur le front intérieur

Les responsables de la sécurité utilisèrent ces appareils, l'électropsychomètre (ou électromètre), durant les années 1950 et 1960, afin de déterminer l'orientation sexuelle des citoyens, en présumant que l'homosexualité rendait plus vulnérable au chantage des agents ennemis. Les données provenant de la soi-disant « fruit machine » entraînent le licenciement de plus d'une centaine de fonctionnaires. L'Église de Scientologie utilise encore de telles machines pour évaluer l'état mental de ses paroissiens.

Electropsychomètre, modèle E-AR-40
 Date 1965/09/07

- The government even commissioned the so-called 'Fruit Machine' to try to identify and expel LGBT people.

The Fruit Machine: Why every Canadian should learn about this country's 'gay purge'

New documentary examines the legacy of Canada's notorious homosexuality detection device



Peter Knegt · CBC Arts · Posted: May 30, 2018 9:40 AM PDT | Last Updated: June 6, 2022



- Many suffered great stigma and shame from friends and family after being publicly outed and dismissed. Some were assaulted, even sexually, by former colleagues. Many became depressed, developed PTSD, turned to drugs and alcohol, and even died by suicide.
- Those who survived carry this stigma with them today, which has various implications for their relationships.
- Excellent documentary about this: *The Fruit Machine* by TVOntario.

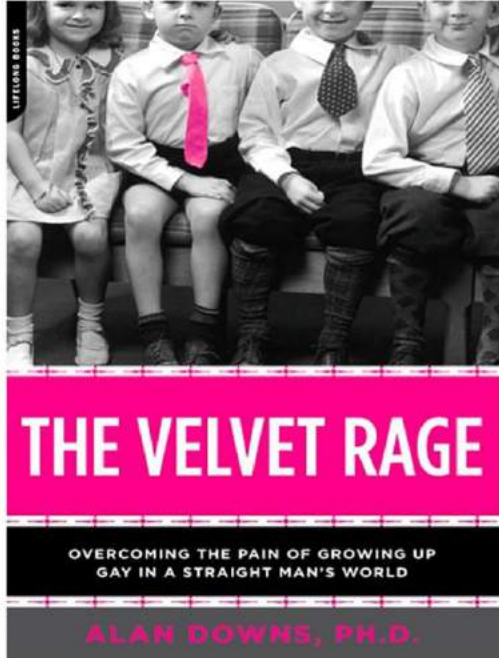


- In the 1980s and 90s, we also witnessed the devastating AIDS epidemic, which killed countless people and also increased stigma, especially against gay men.
- Some also felt let down by the government, which they felt did not act fast enough to contain the epidemic (arguably, this was more of an issue in the US than Canada).



- Some people have yet to fully recover from the profound grief of losing numerous partners and friends at a young age, contributing to a deep sense of loneliness in their later years.

Minority Stress: Social Impact



- Concealment
 - guardedness, inauthenticity, relationship conflict
- Internalized stigma
 - mistrust, unrealistic standards and expectations, relationship dissatisfaction, depression
- Rejection sensitivity
 - stigma preoccupation, misinterpretation of social cues, social anxiety, social inhibition, aversive social behaviour

- The stigma and discrimination I have described can lead to reactions that negatively impact the formation and maintenance of satisfying relationships.
- Some people come out later in life and feel uncomfortable interacting with other older SGM. This can feel very isolating.
- Relationship conflict can occur when one person in a couple does not want to do things in public for fear of being identified or stigmatized.
- Unrealistic standards and expectations for self and others can be an over-compensation for perceived inferiority.
- IH can lead to cynicism about same-sex relationships, impacting commitment (e.g., giving up too easily when there is relationship conflict).
- Due to internalized ageism, some may retreat from social activities, fearing they will be perceived as 'old and pitiable'.

Archives of Sexual Behavior (2022) 51:2269–2298
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02132-3>

ORIGINAL PAPER



Minority Stress and Loneliness in a Global Sample of Sexual Minority Adults: The Roles of Social Anxiety, Social Inhibition, and Community Involvement

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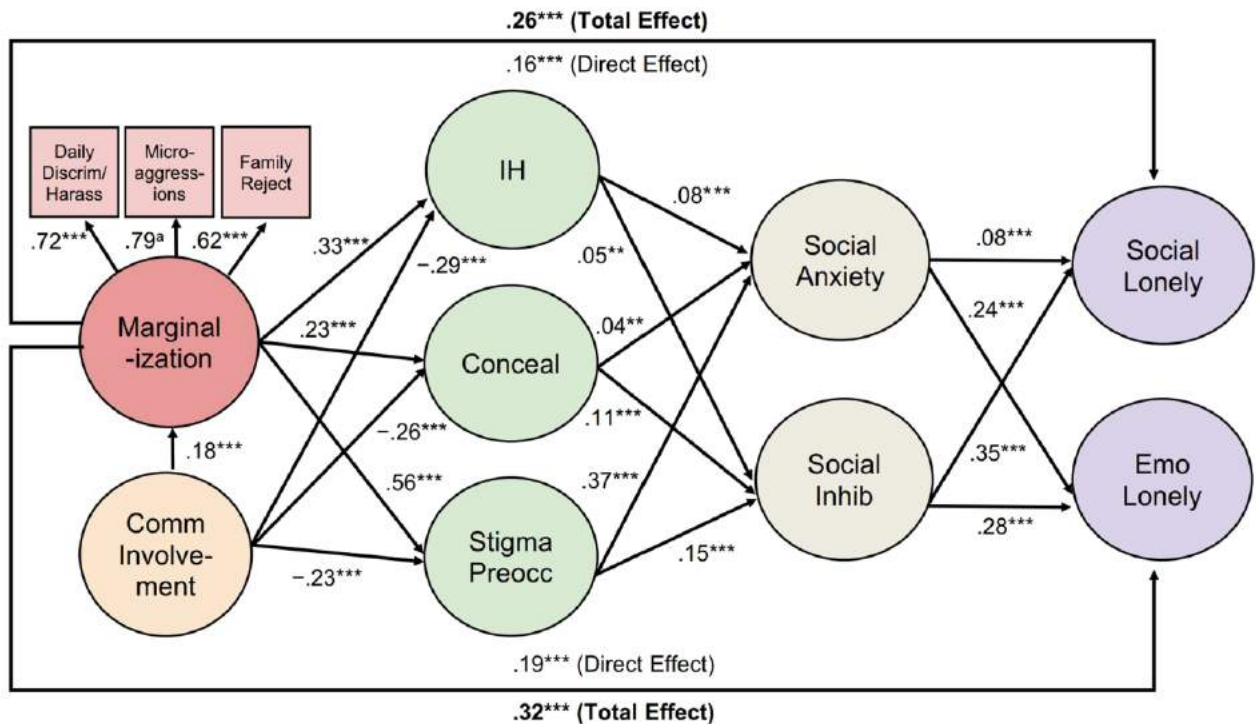
Abstract

Research suggests that loneliness among sexual minority adults is associated with marginalization, but it is unclear which processes may underlie this relationship. This cross-sectional study examined five possibilities: stigma preoccupation, internalized homonegativity, sexual orientation concealment, social anxiety, and social inhibition. The study also examined the possible protective role of LGBTQ community involvement. Respondents were 7856 sexual minority adults aged 18–88 years from 85 countries who completed an online survey. Results of structural equation modeling indicated that marginalization was positively associated with both social and emotional loneliness, and that part of this relationship was indirect via proximal minority stress factors (especially stigma preoccupation) and, in turn, social anxiety and social inhibition. Moreover, while LGBTQ community involvement was associated with greater marginalization, it was also associated with lower levels of proximal stress and both forms of loneliness. Among those who were more involved in the LGBTQ community, the associations between marginalization and proximal stress were somewhat weaker, as were those between stigma preoccupation and social anxiety, and between social inhibition and social loneliness. In contrast, the associations between concealment and social anxiety were somewhat stronger. Model fit and patterns of association were similar after controlling for the possible confounding effect of dispositional negative affectivity, but several coefficients were lower. Findings underscore the continuing need to counter marginalization of sexual minorities, both outside and within the LGBTQ community, and suggest possible avenues for alleviating loneliness at the individual level, such as cognitive-behavioral interventions targeting stigma preoccupation and social anxiety.

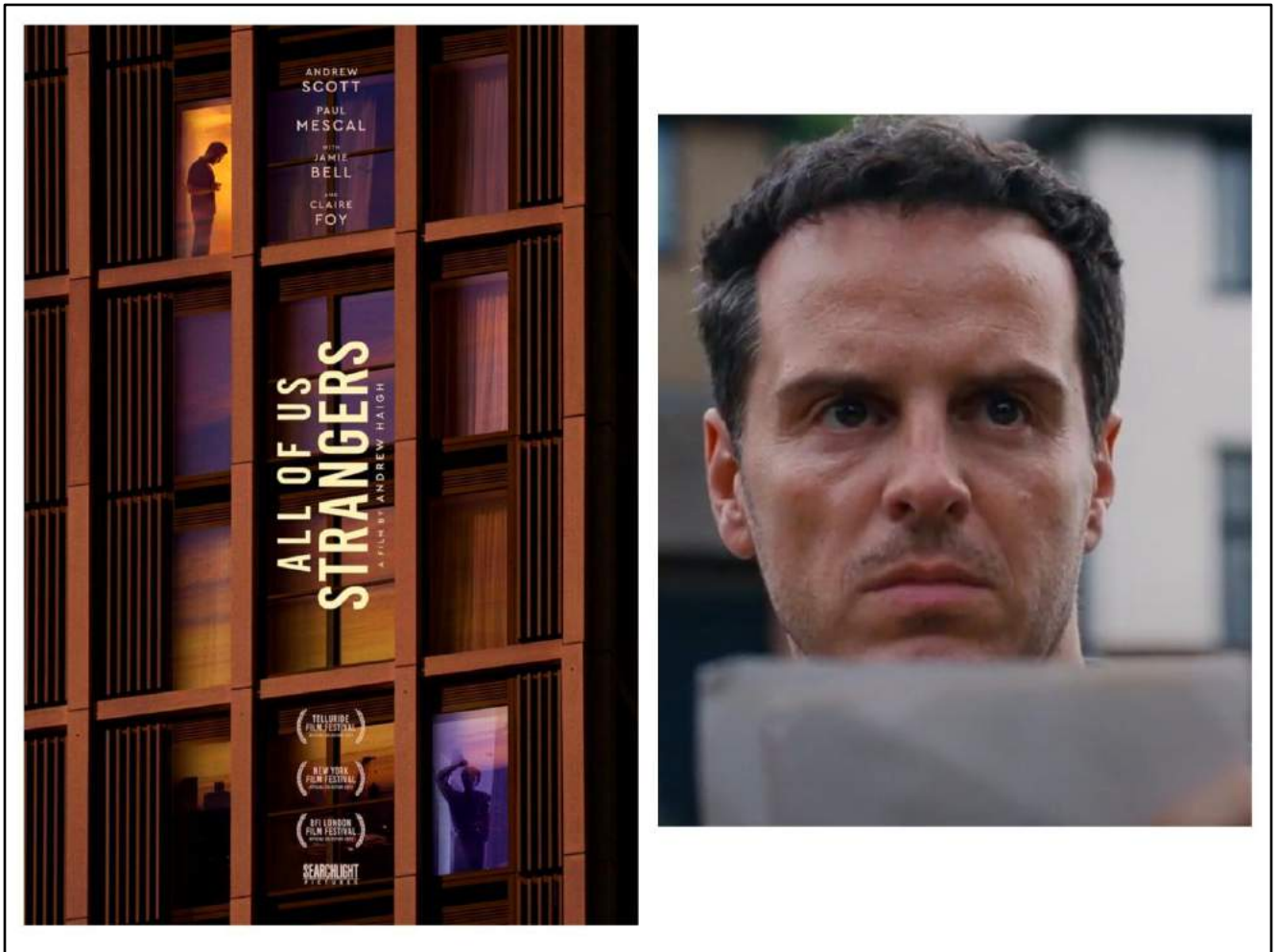
Keywords Sexual orientation · Lesbian/gay/bisexual · Stigma · Harassment · Discrimination

- In a recent study with nearly 8,000 from 85 countries, I found that minority stress is associated with loneliness, and part of this association is through the impact of social anxiety and social inhibition.

Structural Equation Model Linking Marginalization with Loneliness



- In another study (under review), I found that this model is valid across 4 age groups, from emerging to older adults.
- Of course, the relationships likely work the other way, too, considering how loneliness can alter social cognition. So loneliness likely contributes to anxiety, inhibition, internalized negativity, concealment, stigma preoccupation, and perhaps even greater perceptions of stigma and discrimination.
- Minority stress can also cause depression, which in turn causes loneliness through social withdrawal and negative perceptions of others.
- Notably, I also found that LGBTQ community involvement is associated with greater marginalization, and that this relationship is stronger for younger people (perhaps due to their participation in more public activities).
- Despite this risk, community involvement appears to be protective against IH, concealment, and stigma preoccupation. Moreover, for those more involved in the community, several of the relations in the model are weaker.
- There is also a negative relationship between community involvement and loneliness, but not too strong. This makes sense because the important thing is not whether you are involved in the LGBTQ community *per se*, but whether you feel supported and accepted by the community.



- For a deeper and more meaningful insight into loneliness and aging, I strongly suggest watching *All of Us Strangers*, which is in theatres now. This film delves into the nuances of loneliness, including its connections to aging, parental acceptance, bullying, unresolved grief, and its impact on our current relationships.
- Warning: don't watch if in a sad mood!



'A generation of queer people are grieving for the childhood they never had': Andrew Haigh on *All of Us Strangers*

📍 Andrew Haigh at the house where he grew up in Croydon, south London, where he shot his new film, *All of Us Strangers*. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

The writer-director's devastating film, which stars Andrew Scott and Paul Mescal, is hoovering up awards and leaving audiences in pieces. He talks about love, loneliness and the solace of 80s pop

- *The Guardian* had a great interview with the film's director. I think this quote speaks to the kind of loneliness that many middle-aged and older queer people feel today.

Addressing Loneliness

Admit and accept
loneliness

Understand and
reduce impact of
minority stress

Address maladaptive
social cognition

Rekindle or improve
existing relationships

Create
opportunities for
new relationships

Enhance coping skills

- Addressing maladaptive social cognition: cognitive-behavioural interventions are most effective here.
- Rekindling old relationships may be easier than starting from scratch. When people do an inventory, they are often surprised by the number of relationships they have allowed to go dormant.
- Creating opportunities for new connections: following Cacioppo's E.A.S.E. approach may be helpful here (i.e., gradually easing back into social life, starting with non-threatening social encounters). Others can help by providing motivation and support in the initial stages (e.g., accompanying someone to a seniors centre so they do not feel self-conscious).
- Unfortunately, not all loneliness can be alleviated, so enhancing personal coping skills can be helpful (e.g., distraction, mindfulness, 'flow' activities, parasocial relationships). See *Emotional First Aid* by Dr. Guy Winch.

Canada's LGBTQ2S+ safe spaces are disappearing at the worst possible time



By Heather Yourex-West • Global News

Posted March 2, 2023 4:28 pm · Updated March 5, 2023 6:55 pm · 4 min read



WATCH: There are growing concerns for historic “safe spaces” that are meant for members of Canada’s LGBTQ+ community. Places like gay bars and villages are slowly vanishing, especially in the face of gentrification. As Heather Yourex-West reports, the closures couldn’t come at a worse time – as the community is increasingly coming under attack – Mar 5, 2023

- It is vital to safeguard our safe spaces, which are disappearing due to gentrification and over-reliance on technology to meet people.
- Many older adults miss the sense of solidarity and camaraderie they felt as they banded together during the LGBTQ rights movements in the past.
- Having safe spaces is critical now more than ever, as there has been a resurgence of negative sentiment against the community.



- Preserving existing social spaces and building new ones is vital because our need for community does not fade as we age.

Thanks for listening!

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