Loneliness as a modern emotion cluster: a historical perspective

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Loneliness as an emotion cluster

• The emotional turn: Queen Mary Centre for the History of Emotions; European and international perspectives

• Loneliness as a neglected aspect of the history of emotions – exceptions include work on solitude and social demography.

• Accessing meaning and the ‘basic emotions’ problem.

• Loneliness as an ‘emotion cluster’: Fay Bound Alberti, ‘This “Modern Epidemic”: Loneliness as an Emotion Cluster and a Neglected Subject in the History of Emotions. Emotion Review 10 (3), 242-254
Loneliness and modernity

• Linguistic approach to the study of loneliness reveals its emergence as philosophical concept and emotional state c. 1800

• Not always negative – creative and artistic dimensions.

• Physical as well as psychological (in keeping with history of medicine approaches)

Benefits of historical approaches

• Comparative dimension across times and cultures

• Connecting the individual and the social: a note on sources

• Temporal dimension expands the field as well as contributing to psychological, sociological, anthropological and clinical approaches

• Helps to join up theoretical and clinical approaches by focusing on the shifting meanings of loneliness as concept and experience
Collaborations

• Spearheading joint History and Health Sciences project on the history and culture of loneliness in the elderly at the University of York

• Interdisciplinary: University (sociology, history, psychology, health economics) and local practices (faith groups, social care, clinical practice, GP surgeries, hospitals and care homes) across York and the Humber

• Archetypes, communities, psychological experience and praxis

• Demographic complexities of York, compared to Bradford and Leeds
Connections

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