LIVING ALONE IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH
COHOUSING, MULTI-GENERATIONAL LIVING, AND AGING IN PLACE TO THE RESCUE
LONELINESS

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING IT TO MAKE HEALTH AND HOUSING BETTER

REFERENCE: HTTPS://JESSICA-ART.DEVIANTART.COM/GALLERY/46673325/ISOLATION
[Loneliness is] “the Horror not to be surveyed”

-Emily Dickinson
WHY SO MUCH ATTENTION ON LONELINESS NOW?

- Credible research is indicating that large, ever-increasing numbers of people are lonely
- Recent recognition that the issue is not confined to a single demographic or specific settings/situations
- Studies that show loneliness as a reliable predictor of both morbidity and mortality
People are becoming more isolated.

10% of people often feel lonely.

1/3 of us think we have a close friend or relative who is very lonely.

1/2 think people are getting lonelier in general.

1 in 4 people say they have no one to talk to about their personal troubles or triumphs in survey of 1,500 people.

Rule out family members and it rises to 1 in 2.
Survey Finds Nearly Three-Quarters (72%) of Americans Feel Lonely

Osteopathic Physicians Say Silent 'Loneliness Epidemic' Contributes to Nation's Health Woes

NEWS PROVIDED BY
American Osteopathic Association →
Oct 11, 2016, 12:00 ET

CHICAGO, Oct. 11, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A new survey of more than 2,000 American adults found 72 percent report having felt a sense of loneliness, with nearly a third (31 percent) experiencing loneliness at least once a week. The survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of the American Osteopathic Association in September.
WHY THE VARIATION IN THE NUMBERS?

- Many dimensions of loneliness
- Three time and duration-related categories
- Six specific types/kinds of loneliness
- Stigma around loneliness

REFERENCE/POTO: VERNON COAKER, LABOUR MP FOR GEDLING, VIA TWITTER
TIME AND THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LONELINESS

• Transient loneliness
• Situational loneliness
• Chronic loneliness

• Loneliness is not static—it is a fluid experience even for the severely lonely

REFERENCE: HTTPS://JESSICA-ART.DEVIANTART.COM/GALLERY/46673325/ISOLATION
SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND LONELINESS

Social Isolation ‘Triggers’

Personal Circumstances
- Living alone
- Being single or divorced
- Living on a low income
- Living in residential care
- Aged 75 and over

Health and Disability
- Poor health
- Immobility
- Cognitive impairment
- Dual sensory impairment
- Sensory impairment

Personal Characteristics
- Ethnic minority
- Being gay or lesbian

Transitions
- Bereavement
- Deprivation
- Geography
- Crime

Starting or giving up caring
- Retirement
SIX KINDS OF LONELINESS
REFERENCE: PSYCH2GO
STIGMA AROUND LONELINESS

“Yet the very word “lonely” carries a negative connotation...signaling social weakness, or an inability to stand on one’s own. “


attr: John T. Cacioppo, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago and the director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neurosis
LONELINESS AND OUTLIERS
YES BUT...
Who is more lonely?

women more than men.
unmarried men more than unmarried women.
African-Americans more than whites.
less educated more than better educated.
unemployed and retired more than employed.
WHILE IT’S ABOUT ELDERS, IT’S NOT ONLY ABOUT ELDERS

Loneliness varies with age.

1 in 3 adults age 45 and over reported being chronically lonely in 2010.

1 in 5 reported in 2000.

40% of adults today say they are lonely, up from 20% in the 1980s.
ELDERS AND LONELINESS

REFERENCE: HTTPS://CONNECTINGEDMONTONSENIORS.CA/SOCIAL-VULNERABILITY-MAY-LEAD-TO-ISOLATION/
YOUTH AND LONELINESS

- Mental Health Foundation (UK) identifies 18- to 35-year olds, not teenagers, as the age group most likely to struggle with loneliness.

- Identifying social media as the (primary) culprit lessening our understanding of the situation

Those Most Likely to Be Lonely—Unexpected Irony

- Loneliness peaks in adolescents and young adults, then again in the oldest old.
- Stronger risks for those under 65 than those over 65.
- Negatively correlated with income.
- Being unmarried is a risk, although the most lonely are married, live with others, and are not clinically depressed.
- Being childless a risk factor, although having uninvolved children a greater risk.

REFERENCE: HTTP://STANDALONE.ORG.UK/GUIDES/FESTIVE-GUIDE/
HEALTH HAZARDS OF LONELINESS

- Activates danger signals in the brain which in turn
  - Raise the level of stress hormones
  - Create higher vascular resistance
  - Lower the production of white blood cells
  - Increase inflammation

Loneliness is lethal.
Emotional isolation is ranked as high a risk factor for mortality as smoking. Physical diseases may surface with loneliness, including:

- Decreased memory and learning
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Altered brain function
- Heart disease/stroke
- Increased stress levels
- High blood pressure
- Faster growing cancers
- Poor decision-making
- Decreased immunity to disease
- Antisocial behavior
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Depression and suicide
MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

- A causal factor for loneliness can be health problems; in addition, loneliness itself can cause health problems
- Disrupted sleep
- Increased risk of high blood pressure and stroke

Physical health

Can be as harmful to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
Increases risk of high blood pressure
Higher risk of the onset of disability
MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

• Mental health issues can both increase the likelihood of loneliness— and can be a result of it

• Loneliness makes brain go into self-preservation mode

• Creates perception of constant danger

• Establishes link between loneliness and violence

Mental health

Greater risk of cognitive decline
64% chance of developing clinical dementia
More prone to depression
Predictive of suicide in older age
MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

- Loneliness affects the ability to perform the activities of daily living i.e. bathing, dressing, eating
- In the younger, the issue is securing independence
- Here loneliness affects the ability to learn

Maintaining independence

More likely to visit the GP, and have higher use of medication
Early entry into residential or nursing care
Use accident and emergency services
LEADS US TO THE “SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH”

• From the CDC Healthy People 2020: “The complex, integrated, and overlapping social structures and economic systems that are responsible for most health inequities. These social structures and economic systems include the social environment, physical environment, health services, and structural and societal factors.”

• Goal: To create social and physical environments that promote good health for all.
FOCUS WITHIN DEVELOPMENT, LAND USE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

• Wellness Building Standard

• Biophilic design

• Supportive housing and initiatives around multi-generational social support and integration of health care are the exception
# Social Determinants of Health

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## Health Outcomes

Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations
ALL HOUSING TYPES AFFECTED BY SOCIAL CONTEXT

- Reference: Opticos Design, Daniel Parolek
SPECIALTY HOUSING TYPES THAT OFFER SOCIAL SOLUTIONS

- Cohousing
- Cohouseholding
- Coliving
- Collective houses
- Cooperatives
- Intentional communities
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON HOUSING AND THE SOCIAL SPHERE
• For the first time in human history, great numbers of people – at all ages, in all places, of every political persuasion – have begun settling down as singletons.

• We survive our spouses, and do everything we can to avoid moving in with others – including our children. We cycle in and out of different living arrangements: alone, together, together, alone.

• 34.5 million people (28.1%) in the U. S. live alone (2016; up from 17.1% in 1970).

• As of 2014, 18 million living alone are women and 14 million are men; 16 million are between 35 and 64, 11 million are elderly, and 5 million are between 18-34.

• 110 million (45%) of residents 18 and older not married (2017)

• 7.3 million unmarried-partner households (2015). Of these, 433,539 were same-sex households. 32.1% of people aged 18-34 live in their parents’ house, 14% live alone

• Pew research predicts that by the time today’s young adults reach the age of 50, about one in four of them will have been single all their life
“Although I am getting used to living on my own, I still think it's not natural. We humans are herd animals. If it were left to me, I'd make us all live in longhouses, like the ones in Nepal, with all the generations packed in together. We've evolved to depend upon each other, we need each other, especially the old. If I were a stone age woman aged 70, I'd never survive on my own. Without the warmth and protection of the tribe around me, the first cold winter would finish me off..”

-Esther Rantzen, founder of Silver Line, 71
LONELINESS, SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOLITUDE
CONTRASTING LONELINESS WITH SOCIAL ISOLATION

• “Social isolation denotes few social connections or interactions”

• “[L]oneliness involves the subjective perception of isolation—the discrepancy between one’s desired and actual level of social connection.”

REFERENCE: HTTP://WWW.SLATE.COM/ARTICLES/HEALTH_AND_SCIENCE/MEDICAL_EXAMINER/2013/08/DANGERS_OF_LONELINESS_SOCIAL_ISOLATION_IS_DEADLIER_THAN_OBESITY.HTML
CONTRASTING LONELINESS WITH SOLITUDE

- Loneliness is the subjective feeling of being alone
- Solitude is the conscious act of being alone
- “The cure for loneliness is solitude”
THE BACKGROUND AND BENEFITS OF SOLITUDE

• Solitude in history
• Solitude and it’s relationship with creativity and productivity
• Solitude and the promotion of growth and healing

REFERENCE: HTTPS://GEMMASCHIEBEFINEART.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM/2014/03/ALONE_IN_THE_CITY___AFREMOV_L_BY_LEONIDAFREMOV-D31JUK8.JPG
STRIKING A BALANCE

• Good design that makes social contact organic and natural and solitude a viable choice

• Involvement of residents in the design, development, decision-making and management

• Common interests, shared activities, life circumstances as key drivers of social interactions

• Mutual support, sharing, and reciprocity—social connection meeting human needs
THE ROLE OF GOOD DESIGN

- A public realm
- Welcoming front porches opening up to a pedestrian walkway
- A private realm
- Back porch that is for alone time, solitude; sheltered, separate
INVolVEMENT OF RESIDeNTS

• Co-design
• Resident Management
• Non-hierarchical, participative decision-making
• Conflict resolution capability
COMMON INTERESTS, SHARED ACTIVITIES, LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

• Common houses, common spaces, gathering points
• Growing, planning, cooking, eating, and all that goes around food
• Playing and celebrating
• Creating, making stuff
MUTUAL SUPPORT, SHARING, AND RECIPROCITY

- Different kinds of support
  - Expressive
  - Instrumental
  - Informational
  - Appraisal

REFERENCE/LIST: HTTP://WWW.MED.UPENN.EDU/HBHE4/PART3-CH9-KEY-CONSTRUCTS-SOCIAL-SUPPORT.SHTML

REFERENCE/PHOTO: HTTP://WWW.AUTISMAFTER16.COM/ARTICLE/03-20-2013/SUPPORT-SYSTEMS
BEST EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS THAT MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS LONELINESS
ARBORETUM COHOUSING, MADISON, WI
ELDERSPIRIT, ABINGDON, VA
KLEINE BERGSTRASSE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

REFERENCE/GRAPHIC: HTTPS://COHOUSING-INCLUSIVE.NET/ABOUT-US/
L’ESPOIR MOLENBEEK, BRUSSELS
L’Espoir ASBL fête ses 10 ans
17 septembre 2017 de 13h à 18h
5, rue Fin - Jardin Majorelle
1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean

EXPOSITION PHOTOS
BUFFET, MUSIQUES DU MONDE
Animations, projection de films & Ateliers pour enfants

Responsable : Fadel Lahouni
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