Tim Xie:

Welcome to interdisciplinary 248 Loneliness matters. Our lecture today is an introduction to loneliness. If you were to search for scholarly articles on loneliness, you would find millions of them, probably 7 million or more. And so in this course I hope to be able to help you navigate some of these millions of articles.

Tim Xie:

You'll notice that a lot of the lectures will start with a music video. The videos are posted to each class is a link so that it's easier for you to download them.

Tim Xie:

Our objectives today are to start to understand loneliness as an emotion. We're going to differentiate between different definitions so loneliness, aloneness, social isolation, and solitude. And we're going to start to discover the meaning of loneliness and to start to understand why it's so significant to our quality of life.

Tim Xie:

We're going to start to understand loneliness by talking about emotions. I have a question for you. How many emotions do you think have been identified by researchers?

Tim Xie:

The answer is about 34,000. Robert plate chuck in 1980 developed the first emotion wheel to describe the core and complex emotions that he believed describe the human experience. But there are a lot of different emotion wheels and this is one such example and not the one by Robert Chuck. However, the value to them even though they're all different, is that they help you name your feelings. If we can identify how we're feeling, we can then do something about it. So think about the behaviors that go with emotions. For example, if I feel lonely, and I understand that I'm lonely, I can reach out to find someone to talk to. However, if I feel lonely, and I don't understand it as lonely, I might stay in my room and watch Netflix and then wonder why I still have this sad feeling. So if you find lonely on the wheel, so it's on the right side in purple, you'll see how it's right next to isolated and how isolated and lonely both fall into the neglected part of the wheel. And how then those go into sadness.

Tim Xie:

The ability to articulate and identify emotions is an important component of emotional intelligence.

Tim Xie:

So doctors Ekman freezin and Ellsworth developed the first theory of emotions that they believe are experienced across all cultures. These are called core emotions. You'll notice that the six listed on this slide are slightly different than the six that are listed at the center of the emotion wheel on the previous slide some psychologists do not believe in core emotions, and some believes that there are different numbers of core emotions. So for example, put chalk also includes acceptance and anticipation in addition to the ones on this slide.

Tim Xie:

Some emotions are created by combining others. So for example, anger plus fear equals dread for our purposes we'll be talking about these six core emotions today.

Tim Xie:

So happiness, this is where people strike for the most. It's defined as a pleasant emotional state that's characterized by feelings of contentment or joy, gratification satisfaction, well being.

Tim Xie:

research on happiness has increased significantly since the 1960s. Within a number of disciplines, including the branch of psychology called positive psychology.

Tim Xie:

We experience emotion or we express emotion through our facial expressions, like smiling through our body language when we have a nice and relaxed stance, through our tone of voice, which is often upbeat and pleasant.

Tim Xie:

Well, happiness is considered one of the basic human emotions, the things that we think will create happiness tend to be heavily influenced by our culture. So for example, pop culture influences tend to emphasize that attaining certain things like buying a home or having a high paying job, will result in happiness. But the reality of what actually contributes to our happiness is often much more complex and much more highly individualized. People have long believed that happiness and health are connected. And research has supported the idea that happiness can play a role in both physical and mental health.

Tim Xie:

Happiness has been linked to a variety of outcomes including longevity and increased marital satisfaction, and on the other hand, unhappiness has been linked to some poor health outcomes. If you are interested in happiness and the science of happiness, there's an interdisciplinary course number 249 called the science of joy and happiness that you might want to check out.

Tim Xie:

The second core emotion we're going to talk about is sadness. And this is characterized by feelings of disappointment, grief, hopelessness, disinterest and kind of a dampened mood.

Tim Xie:

Everyone experiences sadness from time to time. Sometimes people can experience prolonged and severe periods of sadness that we might identify as depression.

Tim Xie:

Sadness is often expressed by things like crying, lethargy, being really slow and tired, quietness, withdrawing from others.

Tim Xie:

The type and severity of sadness can vary depending on the root cause, and how people cope with such feelings can also be very different from one another.

Tim Xie:

Sadness can lead people to engage in coping mechanisms, like avoiding other people self medicating or ruminating on negative thoughts, thinking them over and over. And such behaviors can actually worsen feelings of sadness and prolong the duration of that emotion.

Tim Xie:

Thirdly, we have discussed so our body language when we feel disgust sometimes will turn away from the object of our disgust. We might have physical reactions such as vomiting or retching, or facial expressions might include wrinkling our nose or curling up our upper lip.

Tim Xie:

The sense of revulsion can originate from a lot of different things like an unpleasant taste or sight or smell. Researchers believe that this emotion evolved as a reaction to foods that might be harmful or fainting fatal, so as an evolutionary thing.

Tim Xie:

So for example, when people smell or taste foods and upon bad Disgust is a very typical reaction.

Tim Xie:

poor hygiene, infection, blood, rot and death can even trigger a disgust response. And this may be the body's way of avoiding things that might make us sick, like transmittable diseases.

Tim Xie:

People also experience moral disgust when they might observe others engage in behaviors that they find as immoral or distasteful or evil.

Tim Xie:

Next, we have fear and fear has an important role in our survival. When you face some sort of danger and experience fear, you go through what we call the fight or flight response. It has other names as well fight fight or flight freeze and others.

Tim Xie:

In this scenario, your muscles become tense, your heart rate and your respiration increase and your mind becomes more alert and it Prime's, your body to either run from the danger or to stand and fight.

Tim Xie:

And this response helps make sure that you are prepared to deal effectively with threats in your environment.

Tim Xie:

Some of our expressions of this emotion include her facial expressions, like widening their eyes and pulling back your chin. We might attempt to hide or flee from the threat. We can have physiological reactions like rapid breathing and a rapid heart rate.

Tim Xie:

Fear is the emotional response to an immediate threat. We can develop similar reactions to anticipated threats, or even our thoughts about potential dangers. And this is sometimes what we think of as anxiety. Social anxiety, for example, involves an anticipated fear of social situations.

Tim Xie:

But some people on the other hand actually seek out fear provoking situations, extreme sports and other thrills can be fear inducing, but some people thrive and even enjoys such feelings.

Tim Xie:

Repeated exposure to a fear object or fear situation can lead to familiarity and acclamation and this can in turn reduce feelings of fear and anxiety. And this is the idea behind exposure therapy.

Tim Xie:

Fifth on our list of core motions is Surprise. Surprise is usually very brief and is characterized by a physiological startle response that follows something unexpected.

Tim Xie:

Surprise can be positive, negative or neutral. An unpleasant surprise might be someone jumping up from behind a tree and scaring you as you walk to correlate.

Tim Xie:

A pleasant surprise might be arriving home to find that your closest friends have gathered to celebrate your birthday.

Tim Xie:

Surprise is often characterized by facial expressions, such as raising your eyebrows, widening your eyes, maybe opening your mouth. Our physical response might include jumping back, we might have a verbal reaction like yelling or screaming or gasping surprise can also trigger the fight or flight response. When startled people might experience a burst of adrenaline that helps prepare your body for fight or flee.

Tim Xie:

Surprise can have important effects on human behavior. For example, research has shown that people tend to disproportionately notice and remember surprising events. And this is why sometimes the surprising or unusual events in the news tend to stand out more memory more than other things. Research has found that people tend to be more swayed by surprising arguments and learn more from surprising information.

Tim Xie:

And finally, anger. Anger can be a particularly powerful emotion characterized by feelings of hostility, agitation, frustration and antagonism towards others. Like fear it can play a role in our body's fight or flight response when a threat generates feelings of anger, you might be inclined to fend off the danger and protect yourself.

Tim Xie:

Anger is often displayed through our facial expressions such as frowning or glaring through our body language like taking a strong stance or maybe turning away through our tone of voice like speaking gruffly or yelling. Our physiological responses include things like sweating, or turning red becoming flushed. We might have aggressive behaviors, like hitting, ticking, throwing things. Anger can sometimes be a good thing. It can be constructive to help clarify your needs in a relationship can motivate you to take action and to find solutions to things that are bothering you. But it can also become a problem when it's excessive or expressed in ways that are unhealthy or dangerous or harmful to others. Uncontrolled anger can quickly turn to aggression, abuse or violence.

Tim Xie:

An emotion like anger could have both mental and physical consequences, unchecked anger can make it difficult to make rational decisions and may actually impact your physical health. It's been linked to coronary heart diseases and diabetes. It's been linked to behaviors that are risky, such as aggressive driving alcohol consumption and smoking.

Tim Xie:

Emotions influence our actions in five main ways.

Tim Xie:

The emotion component is where an individual just experiences their feelings. It's about monitoring your internal universe and recognizing what we're experiencing at the time.

Tim Xie:

Second is the action tendency component. Once we've identified or emotion, the body moves into action. So emotions as we talked briefly about in the last slide can bestow certain actions instead of other actions, which means that while some are beyond our control, like pulling your hand away from a hot iron, others are within our control, like facing our fear to continue with public speaking, speaking for example.

Tim Xie:

Third, we have the appraisal component. We cognitively analyze our emotion. And when we do this, we are able to pick up on the situations actions, environments or individuals that are causing us to feel a certain emotion. This aids us in tracking how stimuli can impact our well being. It's really valuable for helping us communicate the state of our internal world to others.

Tim Xie:

For we have the motor component, so this is the communicative function of how we express what we are experiencing. So our facial expressions or hand gestures or body movements. It's extremely important on the inter individual level, as well as the individual level.

Tim Xie:

And finally, the physiological component. This component supports all of the others and is the chemical reaction that our body experiences. So for example, the rush of blood that flows to our hands when we experience the emotion of anger.

Tim Xie:

So all of these five components of emotions are present in all individuals, but the intensity and the expression of our emotions is very different from one person to another.

Tim Xie:

There are also social factors like gender culture, and race that might influence why people feel emotions differently despite being in similar circumstances.

Tim Xie:

So for example, a statement like I'm scared or I feel agitated, or I don't want to be here, or I don't have enough time to study can all be part of different components of one emotion.

Tim Xie:

emotional regulation is an important part of maturation. emotional regulation is a person's ability to manage and respond to an emotional experience. We have triggers which lead to thoughts and emotions, which lead to actions or inactions, and these lead to consequences, up regulating upregulating. If something like continuously thinking about an event and riling yourself up, and perhaps making it worse, and downregulating is lowering how we express an emotion, so maybe holding back your tears to try and trick yourself into thinking that you're not sad.

Tim Xie:

So as an example, for trigger, think about a time when you were a kid and you didn't get your way. Maybe you wanted to play with a toy that somebody else had. Maybe you wanted to buy something and your parents told you no. So what did you think what were your thoughts? Maybe you thought, well, this isn't fair, or it's my turn to play with that toy. Or my parents are mean or they're no fun. Maybe you felt disappointed or sad or angry or combination of these. So what are your actions or inactions? What did you do? Maybe you yelled or you threw something? Maybe you stopped and you refuse refuse to talk to anyone.

Tim Xie:

Maybe you took the toy away from the other child.

Tim Xie:

All of those things lead to consequences. What were they maybe you got a timeout? Maybe you didn't get to play with the toy for a week. Maybe you still felt disappointed or sad or angry, but you found another toy to play with. And as a result, you still had fun. Or maybe you decided to use your allowance and buy that toy yourself and you got to enjoy it

Tim Xie:

the link to this video is posted to the class and please be aware that the videos that are in the lectures are testable material.

Tim Xie:

As you watch this video, I want you to think about a few things. So first of all, what causes loneliness? Why does loneliness have a biological effect on people?

Tim Xie:

Why have we evolved to get along with each other?

Tim Xie:

How does chronic loneliness affect our moods and thoughts? And why is it so hard to reach out to others and break the chain of loneliness?

Tim Xie:

These are some of the things that we will talk about over the term.

Tim Xie:

Something else just a hypothetical question. In the video, they talk about how in 1985 a person had three close friends on average, and by 2011 that number had dropped to just two close friends. So something just to think about is what you think that number is now.

Tim Xie:

Something else we'll talk about as we go on in the term is some strategies for loneliness like they talked about at the end of the video.

Tim Xie:

It's important to decide if loneliness is an issue for you or for someone close to you. It's important that we become aware of the manifestations of loneliness through our conversations, through journaling, or meditation or the self talk that we have with ourselves. It's important to engage in physical emotional and mental resilience training, and perhaps to explore cognitive behavioral training that we can do through reading or working with a counselor.

Tim Xie:

So before we take a break, I have a quiz.

Tim Xie:

So true or false loneliness is the same as the bodily function of hunger. And this is true. In the video they talk about the work of dawn, sorry, Dr. John Cassiopeia who makes that claim. Loneliness has been described as a hunger not for food, but for social interaction.

Tim Xie:

He says it's a feeling that's biologically programmed into us because we are animals that survive impacts we are social beings.

Tim Xie:

A second true or false question. We do not meet up physically with people as often as we did in the past. And so as I mentioned, before you watch the video. This is true, the decrease in friends from three in 1985 to two in 2011. According to the video in some ways, we're more connected than ever thanks to social media, but we're not connected physically person to person.

Tim Xie:

So think about if this is true for you, your own circle of friends, has it gotten smaller, maybe especially since you've started university.

Tim Xie:

And again, just an interesting tidbit, but we'll learn later that first and fourth year university students are lonelier than those who are in their second or third year.

Tim Xie:

And one last question before we go for break true or false. When I experienced loneliness, it's the same as when my sibling experiences loneliness.

Tim Xie:

And this is false. hopefully over the course of the lecture. this has been clear. it's very individualized. It's how we think, feel and act. someone else may tell you that you're not the only but they would be wrong if you identify your emotion as loneliness, than you are lonely, take a break here. And then, have a listen to the second recording.

binbing:

Hello and welcome to week two. This week we are going to talk about the history of loneliness and look at some theory that loneliness.

binbing:

So I posted a link to a video by Sam Smith with the Lonely Hour. It's something again, just starting with some something to kind of get you into the mood and get you thinking about loneliness.

binbing:

Our objectives today are to trace how the evolution of loneliness started about 2 million years ago. Up until today we're going to look at the changes that have happened in society that has contributed to increase in field deployment.

binbing:

We're going to look at how theorists have advanced our thinking about loneliness. And we're going to look at how loneliness has become a political issue, specifically in Britain and in Japan. So what I've done is split this into three different videos just so that again, so that you kind of take a break because otherwise you know, it could be here for a really long time. The first presentation is going to cover the history of loneliness, the second book cover theories, and the final one will cover the political stuff.

binbing:

So I posted a PowerPoint with that is complete that has all of the information but the recordings have been split up so before we start, I'd like you to reflect on this question. Can you imagine if Canada were to create a position called the Minister of loneliness?

binbing:

So I want to start off with this slide because I want to give you some context and information to keep in the back of your mind as we go through the lecture today. Last week, we started to talk a little bit about friendships. It was in the video if you remember. So this slide shows Dunbar's numbers or the average number of cognitive social relationships that a person can maintain. So this was developed by Robin Dunbar who is a British anthropologist. And what he says is that at the core we have five loved ones those closest to us and what is often considered kind of the outer circle or the number of meaningful contacts that we can have. You'll see there, it's the fourth ring is limited to about 150.

binbing:

So a couple of things about this, first of all, is that if you have a change in one of the circles, then that will affect all of the circles. So think about Alex from the story at the start of your text in chapter two. Let's say you put yourself in his shoes, and let's say 15 close friends, but then you get divorced. So all those numbers are probably going to shift right? Some of the people who were maybe good friends might suddenly just become friends or even just meaningful contests or maybe even you know, just acquaintances. Right? The other thing to keep in mind is that Dunbar linked his numbers to brain size and that has, as you can probably guess, been widely disputed.

binbing:

So according to Dunbar, and many of the people that he's influenced, he talks about this rule of 150 being true from the early hunter gatherers all the way through, you know, 11th century English villages, to communes to factories, even to military organizations, and even your Christmas card list. He says that if you exceed 150, then your networks not going to be very cohesive and it's not going to last very long. So what are the implications for the era of urbanization might be that in order to avoid alienation, tension city residents should find sort of quasi villages of about 150 within your city.

binbing:

Something else it's important to remember is that the numbers represent a range. So extroverts tend to have a larger network and spread themselves a little more thinly across their friends, whereas introverts concentrate more on a smaller pool of really thick contacts. Women also generally tend to have slightly more context contacts within those inner layers, so that loved ones good friends and friends.

binbing:

Something that determined these layers in real life is the frequency with which you see people would have to decide every day about how you invest your time. What you have available for social interaction. And Dunbar says that's limited. So that affects you know, those numbers as well.

binbing:

Dunbar's number might be most applicable for pre modern societies or for middle income groups in contemporary Western societies, Western societies sorry. So research does show that his his data tends to be kind of skewed towards Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic societies. And some of these societies have taken some of his research to heart. For example, the Swedish tax authority has restructured their offices so that they stay within the 150% threshold. Sorry.

binbing:

So think about your world. Now. What do you spend a lot of time doing and then, you know, there's a good chance that you spend a lot of time on social media. So do you think that social media has made a difference in terms of the numbers think about all these different layers and think about your friends on you know, Instagram or if you're of my generation Facebook, right? Some of us have hundreds or even 1000s of friends so Dunbar argues that when people have more than 150 friends on Facebook, or Twitter or Instagram or Snapchat, this represents normally what we would consider those outer layers of contact. So the low stakes connection, the acquaintances, even just the people we can recognize, right? For most people, any sort of meaningful intimacy is not really probably possible beyond 150.

binbing:

So a suggestion for an activity is that if you have time write out the names of all your loved ones, so your loved ones, your good friends, your meaningful contacts, dated, and then when you're when you graduate from university redo that activity and see if the numbers have changed at all.

binbing:

John Cassiopeia, who we're going to talk about later, when we look at theories of loneliness, has traced loneliness back to the first primates 52 million years ago. So you'll see in the top right hand corner of a lot of the slides today, there will be a timeline so it'll give you an idea of you know, just where we are just something quick to look at. Loneliness as we know, it is a relatively modern concept. Primates found that they had to be in bands to survive and as time went on, it became even more important to stay in a band because early humans were even more aggressive and likely to kill a stranger than the primates were. So humans have survived as a species, not because of necessarily physical advantages, but by our ability to connect in social groups.

binbing:

So the next stage in our evolution was to develop the skills to allow us to be able to kill at a distance. Now this requires teamwork. Everyone had to work together in order to kill the saber toothed Tiger. This cooperation also made it possible to plan for the future and for the division of labor to occur.

binbing:

Being in a group provided both the numbers and the security to meet and connection within tribes improve creativity and innovation. Emotional knowledge was valuable so tribes defaulted to togetherness and so being alone became aversive and something to avoid.

binbing:

So let's do a little quiz. True or false? This question is from the pre readings in your ebook. If a Viking was banished, the most sorry, Viking was banished, he most feared that he would die. Or be killed.

binbing:

The answer to that is false. Most painful of all the banished by King was cut off from his family and society. His entire identity had rested on being affiliated with his family. Now he was isolated and alone.

binbing:

So think to 2021 Do you think this is still the case?

binbing:

early societies the average person could not afford to be lonely because it made a withdrawal from the protection provided by civilization. Before the 1800s the community required for survival, and any sense of being alone or lonely was eliminated by going back into a cities walls or city limits.

binbing:

So this graph shows the use of the term loneliness. And you can see that in writing before the 1800s it was not a word that was really used very often. The most comparable term was one leanness, which just meant being alone and didn't have any of the negative connotations of being lonely. So think back to our definitions for last week.

binbing:

So here's an example of one linguist with shopkeeper Thomas Turner wrote about the loss of his wife. He said, Whenever it shall please the almighty to take for me the wife of Lagos and then shall I be like a beacon upon a rock or an ensign on Hill, just to to to every since your friends are not a friendly companion left to comfort my afflicted mind, and yield a pleasing comfort of consolation to a mind quite worn to the grave with trouble.

binbing:

So the context here comes a little bit from religion which gave meaning to all existence and the collective was emphasized. More than the individual. So you can see in this passage how Thomas never once really mentions being lonely, even though he's alone, because he was never left lonely by God.

binbing:

The term loneliness began to emerge around the 1800s. As we saw on that graph a couple slides ago. The term individualism was also used for the first time around 1830. So prior to this, people banded together and collective units are socially cohesive groups, as we've been talking about with the primates and early humans.

binbing:

So now we're going to look at the journal entries of Queen Victoria after she lost her husband, Albert, and compare them to what we saw to Thomas Turner's experience when he lost his wife. While Thomas Turner was certainly grieving he was not necessarily lonely, because the structure of society at his time, which was about 1759, didn't really have a speaks for loneliness. However, in 1862, during Queen Victoria's time of grief, there was vocabulary for loneliness, and she definitely used it. She even wore black for the rest of

binbing:

human history. I feel my loneliness and desolation more and more. All the trees and trucks make me so sad to look at now. Your older loved them so a crushing sense of increased loneliness came over me and I felt miserable.

binbing:

That's quite different from what Tom's term.

binbing:

So the dates on his timeline shows and significant changes that have affected loneliness in the pre 1900s only 5% of all households for single person in the 1910s. We saw a rising urbanization, but servants and households and declining birth rates.

binbing:

In 1938, Gregory Silkeborg, who is a psychoanalyst, and a psychiatric historian, published one of the first psychological analyses on loneliness. In the 1950s, single person households increased to be about 9% of the total, so almost double what it was two years earlier.

binbing:

In 1959, the German psychoanalyst Frieda from Reitman, wrote an essay called loneliness and she comments that there's really very little known about loneliness. Edge contributes this to the fact that most therapists don't even want to talk about the subject because it was such a painful experience.

binbing:

So this essay brought loneliness more into the realm of psychiatry.

binbing:

In the 1960s, the percentage of single person households grew at a much steeper rate. It was driven by high divorce rate of birth rate that continued to fall and longer lifespans overall.

binbing:

In the 1980s, as we'll see, the medical literature on loneliness really took off and began to emerge. And we'll see that when we start talking more about specific theories Okay, so all that history stuff sometimes makes my head hurt. So this is a good time for structure and a break.

binbing:

As I said, next, we're going to talk about theory so I will see you shortly