3. THE IMPORTANCE OF APPROACHING LONELINESS FROM A LIFE CYCLE AND INTERSECTIONALITY PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Generally, within human development, loneliness has been categorised as part of later stages of life; indeed, the profile of an older woman who lives alone is the most commonly presented to illustrate the issue.

The increase in research and promotion of public policies around loneliness in Western societies is allowing for a broader analysis of the real issue, thanks to the prevalence of data gathered from various generations and more longitudinal coverage across the human life cycle. A good example of this in our city is the work done by the City Council to examine and combat an issue that, as we know, affects multiple groups of residents. The collection of data, from the first Òmnibus Survey (June 2020) onwards, has brought us closer to seeing the prevalence and manifestations of loneliness at different age ranges in the city more clearly, setting out the basis for objectively founded action through public policies that centres city residents' real needs.

This new view of the issue, which emphasises the potential presence of loneliness throughout life, has focused on assistance from health, educational, social and academic professionals more heavily due to the circumstances created by covid-19, especially considering the effects of lockdowns and social restrictions on the emotional health of age groups that are more diverse than those usually linked to loneliness.

A relatively recent finding thus becomes clear: in the city of Barcelona, loneliness affects certain age groups in the life cycle more heavily, and older people are not always the group most impacted (2020–2030 Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. Barcelona City Council).

This fact is highly important: (1) so as not to stigmatise old age as a time where loneliness is an inherent part of life; (2) so as not to underestimate prevalence in other age groups and therefore make the mistake of not tackling the problem at other life stages and ignoring its effects on subsequent development; and (3) in order to open the door to analysing loneliness throughout life, shunning a linear view of human development that portrays the course of life as a bell curve – from growth to deterioration – without considering human plasticity and implementing optimisation (for it to work better) or compensation (as a strategy to tackle losses) mechanisms (Triadó; Celdrán; Vilar, 2019).

It is at this point that a life cycle perspective becomes necessary in order to understand human beings' paths and to see loneliness as an issue that can occur at any time in life, influenced by interconnected generational, cultural, historical and individual factors.

Loneliness particularly affects certain age groups in the life cycle, and older people are not always the most impacted

THE LIFE CYCLE PERSPECTIVE. BEYOND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The life cycle perspective within psychology as a discipline is much more than a theory. It is an approach that seeks to overcome the growth–decline dichotomy that had previously characterised analysis of the course of life and recognises that gains and losses can occur at any time in life. Referring to life cycle psychology therefore implies the adoption of a broader perspective than the view usually taken by so-called *developmental psychology* (Dulcey Ruiz; Uribe, 2002).

Various authors (Kail; Cavanaugh, 2011) indicate that, as a result of an increase in longitudinal research and life course studies, the life cycle perspective has become a key contextual and dialectic framework that considers the whole of life as continuous with various changes. This way, historical, sociocultural, contextual and everyday parameters take precedence over any abstract classification that focuses solely on age as a criterion (and the homogenising, *stage-based* view is thus abandoned).

In the face of the homogenising, stage-based view, the life cycle perspective becomes a key contextual and dialectic framework that considers the whole of life as continuous with various changes

The life cycle perspective offers a new vision of the determinants of development, meaning the factors that influence the trajectory of each individual's life. As pointed out by Triadó, Celdrán and Villar (2019), in reference to Baltes's fundamental contribution (1987), there are three types of influence on our development from different angles, which stem from biological or socioenvironmental factors:

- **Normative age-related influences.** Factors that affect everyone at certain age intervals in a specific community. For example, the start of adolescence, arrival at the age of majority or retirement.

- **Normative history-related influences.** Factors that occur at a certain historical moment and only affect individuals from a certain generation or impact people living at the same time but from different age cohorts in different ways. For example: the sociohistorical conditions that influenced children of the period after the Spanish Civil War in the first half of the twentieth century under Francoism.

- **Non-normative influences.** Factors that only affect a certain individual or a very specific group, which explain individual differences between people of the same age. For example, being forced to migrate for economic reasons, become a widow/widower or being diagnosed with a degenerative disease.

LOOKING AT LONELINESS THROUGH THE LIFE CYCLE PRISM

This framework allows for an **approach to loneliness** that is much more in tune with the nature of the problem, as ***the life cycle perspective*** does the following:

- It includes a **significant cultural component** that impacts various stages of the life cycle. We know that the culture to which we belong contributes towards building meaning regarding our relational expectations, and that, in turn, influences what we expect from others and the direction of our life goals.

  This could explain (as seen previously) the differences between Nordic and Mediterranean cultures, for example, in terms of the desirable amount of family support and the resulting discrepancies in prevalence of loneliness.[13] This difference has been attributed to the high expectations surrounding social relationships, and especially family, in Mediterranean societies. We need to consider the weight carried by expectations and the assessment made by the person when configuring their feeling of loneliness, and we must do this beyond an intrapersonal perspective. The life cycle perspective can help with this. Generational and cultural factors intervene in the formation of our expectations, which end up influencing subjectivity, along with other variables (Martínez; Celdrán, 2019).

- It considers **generational aspects** that can impact the life of certain groups of the population more heavily depending on the time in life at which they find themselves at that moment. These are what political science and sociology call impression-making events (Simón, 2021): historic moments that occur in a person's adolescence or youth and therefore have a significant impact on their subsequent life trajectory. They might include the Covid-19 social restrictions for adolescents and young people, as these measures limited their personal network at a time in life at which social relationships have a heavy influence on people's psychological and social development.

- It views **human ageing as a process** that consists of growing and ageing throughout life, in which no period or stage of life can be understood on its own, without consideration of its origins and consequences (Kail; Cavanaugh, 2011). From this standpoint, if we want to understand a particular period, we need to know what happened before (life story) and consider the effects it could have on the future. Therefore, first of all, we have to keep in mind that loneliness at certain times of life can have an effect on the person's subsequent well-being (and even on their development). Take the example of a newborn baby without a solid attachment to any parent figure and the consequences this lack can have on subsequent life stages. Secondly, we must remember that some psychological characteristics may deteriorate over the course of a life, while others can get stronger or develop more optimally than in earlier periods, faced with these losses. For example, various studies analysing the psychological well-being of different age groups during the covid-19 lockdown have observed that older people had more cognitive and emotional resources to deal with the situation than younger

13. Though the European countries where older people have most frequent contact with their children are Italy, Greece and Spain (Eurofound: European Quality of Life Survey, 2012), loneliness is more prevalent among older people in southern Europe than in the north: a phenomenon that has been studied widely (Fernández; Abellán; Ayala, 2018).

generations, and therefore experienced less psychological distress during the restrictions (Yanguas, 2020; Losada-Baltar, 2020).

The life cycle perspective offers a reference framework that can help us as public service professionals to **understand the causes, consequences and domains of loneliness in a multidimensional way** and to implement a **non-deterministic view that promotes change and repair**, in recognition of the role we can play as community agents within the individual's context of influence. The focus must be placed on personal empowerment to deal with situations of loneliness through resilience and to achieve life goals through free selection of certain objectives, through optimisation of the (personal and community) resources available to maximise the achievement of these objectives, and through compensation via strategies that enable us to regulate the losses that occur throughout life.

It is therefore important to pay attention to how the historical time, social opportunities and inequalities, and culture affect individual experience at each stage of life.

The life cycle perspective offers a reference framework that can help us to understand the causes, consequences and domains of loneliness in a multidimensional way.

LONELINESS THROUGHOUT LIFE. FEELING SUPPORTED AT KEY MOMENTS

The life cycle perspective recognises that the experience of loneliness can act in a cumulative, interactive way and shape people's lives.

If an individual feels lonely during one of the key transitions for their development, this can have an effect on their subsequent life trajectory.

For example, when a young person who migrated to the country leaves a centre for minors, they have no social support, which can have a strong negative impact on their life trajectory and incorporation into the world of work. This can lead to a whole host of inequalities and insecurity that highlight serious individual differences with other, non-racialised young people with social support and better training and employment opportunities. All of this takes place at a time of transition to the adult world, where employment is one of the pillars for building a life plan for the future and for having access to basic rights (such as housing).

If an individual feels lonely during one of the key transitions for their development, this can have an effect on their subsequent life trajectory.

Nonetheless, having dealt with loneliness by developing strategies that compensate for losses can help the person to accumulate resources for use in situations of risk of loneliness in the future. We have seen this happen in older people, who already felt lonely before the lockdown caused by the pandemic, so their feeling of loneliness did not grow and they had already acquired everyday strategies to tackle the conditions imposed by the restrictions (Yanguas, 2020; Losada-Baltar, 2021).

Just as our life experiences and important events in our history and in our social context shape our development and behaviour, loneliness also plays a role in forming the story of our lives.

Below are some key concepts we can use to analyse situations of loneliness and offer support from a life cycle perspective. These concepts require us to pay attention to each individual's personal story and their shared life (or social) history.

COHORT:
people who were born during the same period and who experience social changes within a culture at the same time in their life. There are cohorts who go through an important time in their life with a higher risk of loneliness, such as people who were teenagers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

TRANSITION:
a change or shift between stages and statuses or roles. For example, the transition from being a student to joining the world of work. In social loneliness terms, many older people who retired during the Covid-19 pandemic had drastically reduced access to training and

leisure in their surroundings, which hampered their planned goals for this time in life and reduced their social participation (with the implications relating to the change in role this involves).

TRAJECTORY:

this involves a view of long-term patterns of stability and change, made up of multiple transitions (always inserted into trajectories). For example, maternity is a transition that leads to a longer trajectory with a certain degree of stability that will probably include other transitions (changing professional role, being a main carer, feeling lonely during breastfeeding, etc.). Trajectories are not necessarily a straight line, but there is some degree of continuity in their direction.

LIFE EVENT:

this is a significant occurrence that implies a relatively abrupt change, which can have serious, lasting effects. This term refers to the event itself and not to the transition that occurs as a result of it. For example, the death of a loved one is a significant life event that can involve a series of changes, including the risk of feeling lonely.

A. HOW IS LONELINESS FUELLED THROUGHOUT ONE'S LIFE? THE SOURCES

Though adolescence and old age are the most studied life stages when it comes to loneliness, it is important to identify a series of situations in our culture that can generate loneliness or a risk of loneliness, associated with various age groups.

As professionals in direct contact with people who could be feeling lonely, we must pay attention to the emergence of these factors (sources) in their life story, make sure they do not have to repeat themselves over and over, and facilitate the sharing of relevant information through networking.

Thanks to Barcelona City Council's promotion and development of the **2020–2030 Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness**, the list of known sources of loneliness at different stages of life has been **extended and updated**. Here, we have listed some common sources and other, more specific ones linked to life transitions that are important in our culture throughout the life cycle, as well as the events that can significantly affect a life story.

# SOURCES OF LONELINESS ACCORDING TO AGE BRACKET

(2020–2030 Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. Barcelona City Council)

CHILDHOOD	ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH	ADULTHOOD	OLD AGE
• **No one to play with**	• Moving house	• Moving house	• Moving house
• Situations of bullying or harassment at school	• Lack of close friends	• **Change or loss of job**	• **Loss of partner and meaningful social relationships**
• Rejection from peer group	• Not accepted by peer group	• Lack of friends, loved ones or partner	• **Presence of mental illness or physical limitation**
• **Little time spent with parents**	• Situations of bullying or harassment at school	• Migration processes	• Deterioration in health
• Moving house	• Lack of partner	• **Chronic unemployment**	• Reduced social activity
• Discrimination due to disability	• **Pressure characteristic of adolescence**	• **Caring for a dependent person**	• Living with a disability
• Living in abusive environment	• Migration processes	• **Being the victim of a scam**	• No longer receiving assistance from carers
• Loss and grief	• Living in an abusive environment	• **Being a parent**	• Becoming homeless
• Covid-19	• Gender violence	• Having a disability	• Children leaving home
	• Discrimination due to disability	• No longer receiving assistance from carers	• Gender violence
	• Deterioration in health	• Becoming homeless	• Retirement
	• Loss and grief	• Gender violence	• Becoming dependent, receiving care
	• Covid-19	• Deterioration in health	• Loss and grief
		• Children leaving home	• Covid-19
		• Becoming dependent, receiving care	
		• Loss and grief	
		• Covid-19	

*In bold, the sources exclusive to each life stage.

SOURCES OF LONELINESS PRESENT AT DIFFERENT STAGES:

bullying or abuse, moving house, migration processes, lack of friends or social relationships, lack of partner, children leaving home, loss and grief, becoming homeless, deterioration of health, disability or dependence, Covid-19.
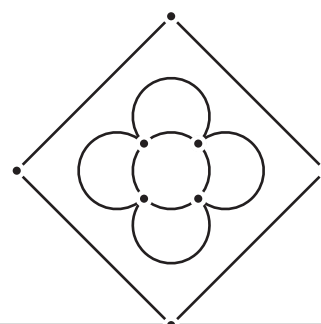
B. HOW CAN PROFESSIONALS DEAL WITH THE PRESENCE OF THESE SOURCES IN OUR DIRECT ASSISTANCE?

- Identifying the presence of these factors can be an **informative, restorative and/or preventive detection process** that deals with how they have affected, currently affect and will affect the person's future. This is consequently a valuable source of information in order to find out about strategies previously adopted and any losses experienced, to support the person in the present in the search for optimisation mechanisms and resources, and to work on the prevention and anticipation of future consequences. Therefore, if the person expresses that one of these events has occurred in their life, we need to take an active look at their life cycle, avoiding a static, temporal analysis that only focuses on the situational effects of the feeling of loneliness. Knowing how they have dealt with prior situations, deciding how we can guide them today in terms of the specific effects of loneliness and seeing the challenges that could arise in future events requires us to maintain a longitudinal view.

- Being aware of the presence of these sources of loneliness greatly helps us to **provide specific, diverse, personalised, efficient support opportunities**. By this, we mean both implementing support strategies and the appropriate resources for each situation (facilitating support in the area closest to the issue that is generating the loneliness: expanding the personal network, providing housing solutions, offering mental health care, promoting incorporation into the world of work) and referring, sharing and utilising the networking done by the most appropriate community resources and services, thus making the process more efficient to facilitate debureaucratised support that fulfils each individual's specific, unique needs in an optimal way.

AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE: PAYING ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY

When analysing the sources of loneliness detailed in the section above, we can glimpse how various overlapping oppressions or discriminations can generate specific situations of inequality that lead people to feel lonely.

If we take a closer look at the causes mentioned by the 2020–2030 Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, in all age brackets, certain sources of loneliness marked by oppression relating to gender, class, origin or disability stand out (including: *gender violence, migration processes, homelessness, situation of disability*). Sexual orientation or age (a cross-cutting category) could be added as other dimensions that can generate a specific set of situations of loneliness.

Therefore, even just when looking at the causes of loneliness, **an intersectional perspective must be adopted**: one that takes into account all the diversity and complexity of people, groups, contexts and life stories. Going a step further, expressions of loneliness (gender, cultural and even generational differences in its manifestation or emergence), the areas of life it impacts (mental health, physical and social well-being), the consequences it can generate (isolation, addictions, depression, stigma, suicide) and the responses that can be offered (individual, group, community, institutional) require an analysis that does not homogenise cases or solutions and that deals with situations of loneliness in the plural, taking into account human complexity.

> **When dealing with loneliness, an intersectional perspective must be adopted: one that takes into account all the diversity and complexity of people, groups, contexts and life stories.**

The main aim of this perspective is to be able to generate responses in public policy that provide individualised assistance and avoid allowing situations of loneliness where oppressions overlap to fade away into the margins. We need to be attentive, understanding and offer support adapted to situations of loneliness of those affected by multiple forms of discrimination.

Intersectionality therefore examines how **systems of oppression relating to social identities** (age, gender, origin, class, sexual orientation, etc.) **are interrelated** on multiple, simultaneous levels, thus **explaining social inequality from a multidimensional standpoint**.

During detection, therefore, we must broaden our perspective beyond a segmented sociodemographic profile (group of women, group of young people, group of migrants) and instead consider **how loneliness can be presented, be expressed and develop in different ways when various dimensions overlap and lead to multiple inequalities affecting the person's life**. Evidently, being an older migrant woman who is suffering from gender-based violence and has no support generates specific needs that will require a careful response to the situation. Another example is that of loneliness caused by transphobia among young unemployed trans people in the city of Barcelona, which requires a non-homogenised response involving cross-cutting youth- or employment-related initiatives, mobilisation of various agents and resources, and a particular understanding of the psychosocial impacts this complex situation can have on the person (as well as of the loneliness risk factors that can emerge in the short, medium and long term).

> In the detection process, we must broaden our perspective and take into account how loneliness can be presented, expressed and developed differently when various dimensions that exercise multiple inequalities on a person's life overlap.

A. DIVERSITY AS A STARTING POINT

So, the intersectional perspective directs our attention to an obvious fact: that people are diverse, loneliness has multiple causes and it is experienced in different ways. Taking diversity into account helps us to offer individualised responses that consider overlapping discriminations and to pay attention to other situations that may exacerbate a feeling of loneliness. The life cycle perspective, meanwhile, enables us to deal with intraindividual diversity from a time standpoint. Therefore, the combination of these two dimensions provides us with a longitudinal, cross-cutting viewpoint that enriches the detection process and our support for the public.

Some of the axes of inequality we can take into account when detecting loneliness are as follows.

AGE, TIME IN LIFE

People can accumulate experiences of loneliness from other stages in life, which reduce or increase their ability to deal with their current loneliness. A life cycle perspective is essential in order to understand how the individual experiences loneliness and the differences within each age group. As indicated in the Strategy, the probability of feeling lonely increases significantly both in processes of transition to adult life and in moments of solitude.

> For example, in the 'young people' group, unaccompanied immigrant children are at high risk of loneliness, as various difficulties intertwine at the time of a life transition, which can have a drastic impact on multiple dimensions and on this change in life stage.
>
> If we focus on the risk of loneliness among widowed women over 80 in a situation of disability and poverty (and in neighbourhoods without much of a community network), a whole, specific field of potentialities for loneliness with a series of very particular needs opens up.
>
> Another example is the case of older people without children, who experience less loneliness compared to older people who have had children. This is down to two factors, the first being that older people without children have developed strategies to deal with loneliness, and the second being that they have no expectations in terms of fulfilment of their care needs.

ORIGIN, CULTURE, RACE

Migration situations can add risks of loneliness linked to migratory grief, uprooting, lack of sense of belonging, social exclusion and insufficient access to rights. Economic, legal and housing difficulties, migrations caused by conflict or poverty, and racism in the host society (combined with sexism and ageism, which generate specific oppressions) can

seriously exacerbate social isolation and discriminations, which intensifies the presence of loneliness at decisive moments of transition.

It is important to identify the elements that lead people to lack a sense of connection or belonging at key moments in the life cycle. As indicated by professionals from various services in the city of Barcelona who have analysed loneliness in young people (the findings of which can, on a general level, be transferred to other age groups), it is crucial to identify what they call 'ambiguous identities': elements that make young people feel rejected due to their difference, and that aggravate social isolation (Barcelona City Council, 2021. 'Més de 100 professionals de joventut es posen les ulleres contra la soledat').

Inability to speak the local language, late incorporation into the school system, cultural differences, irregular status, inadequate access to the right to housing, the situation of unaccompanied minors, loss of freedom in immigration detention centres, and so on. The accumulation and overlapping of situations that carry a high risk of loneliness or social isolation require the promotion of specific support for newcomers in their process of migrating and building life plans.

Further, paying attention to other axes of oppression that generate intersecting discriminations is essential when dealing with specific issues (gender, origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc.).

For example, when a Romani woman who is a mother enters a supermarket, she may frequently feel observed, judged and criminalised, due to racialisation. Women in this situation often feel as though the cashiers or even the security staff are following them and watching them, assuming that they have come to steal. They tend to do their shopping as quickly as possible, so as to escape the situation. This can have a significant impact on their feeling of belonging, and as a result, on the feeling of loneliness.

Meanwhile, the belief that older people do not have the capacity to learn – a prejudice based on the stereotype of mental rigidity during old age – constitutes a huge obstacle in older migrant people's access to learning the local language. Combined with this are factors that can increase anguish in complex life situations (such as access to health treatments inconsistent with their cultural beliefs, at a time in life where they might need care the most) as well as impacting the feeling of loneliness.

DISABILITIES

Our society generates a series of situations that increase the risk of loneliness when a person has a disability. According to a 2018 survey among people in a situation of functional dependence (data gathered in MSAL), approximately two thirds of this group had felt left out or a lack of companionship in the previous year.

The type of disability, the time at which this disability is acquired (in the course of the life cycle), the economic resources available, the urban environment and housing (accessibility) where the person lives day to day, the social support received from the local family network and the community network, and the stigma associated with each specific situation are components that intensify or shape different experiences on the same axis of discrimination.

Nonetheless, one of the main triggers of loneliness among people with a disability is not always directly linked to strictly objective factors, but rather to ideological elements: prejudices. The lack of accessibility around us generates a host of frustrations and reduces opportunities of all kinds, but stigma has a decisive impact on one's intimate and per-

sonal life, leading to difficulties in seeking friendship and sexual or affective relationships (especially for people with communication and speaking difficulties).

On top of the obstacles they face in various areas of life, people are burdened with breaking down the prejudice against them in order to establish intimate relationships (a significant factor in emotional loneliness): a task they should not have to face alone.

By looking at this issue from an intersectional perspective, we can examine disability at the same time as gender, for example. A widely made observation is that women's expectations in terms of relationships differ significantly from men's. It is therefore highly likely that increased difficulties in establishing sexual and affective relationships have a different impact on women with a disability than on men with a disability.

GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Non-binary, non-monogamous and non-heterosexual people can experience situations of discrimination that exacerbate loneliness at many moments in the life cycle and have an especially painful impact in stages like childhood and adolescence. In many cases, these situations can intensify or take new forms or directions at different ages, for example when a person goes 'back in the closet' when they need to live in a residential centre due to a situation of dependence, or when someone has a less dense family network because family members rejected their sexual orientation and they require long-term care as their health is deteriorating.

In addition, as pointed out by Dr Sara Moreno from a sociological analysis and gender perspective, there are gender differences in how people express and experience loneliness: though men are more likely to suffer from emotional loneliness (according to evidence from various studies and surveys), women display the feeling more directly. An analysis of uses of time (which is essential to the gender perspective, given the invisible nature of care in our society) reveals how a lack of resources in complex life situations – for example, a young person who does not have a job or study – generate different social demands and confrontations for men and women: in these situations, young women are assigned care tasks, while men are not (or if they are, they do not do them or they do not attach any meaning to them). This could explain why women feel resigned in the face of this situation and men feel frustrated, as well as why young men experience more emotional loneliness.

It is crucial that we take gender differences into account when detecting loneliness, as well as the time in life and associated discriminations (maternity, empty nest, provision of care, gender violence, the psychosocial impact of unemployment, transphobia, etc.).

Specifically, we must remember that, in our society, being a woman brings with it a series of factors that foster inequality and increase the risk of loneliness: longer life expectancy (more accumulated dependence), more difficulties accessing the labour market, more precarious work, higher probability of widowhood, more poverty, more time dedicated to care, more single-person households, more impact from an empty nest, etc.

For example, it is very likely that a woman who has dedicated her time to caring intensively for a dependent relative has accumulated pains and/or illnesses that she has been ignoring. Then, when she stops being a carer, these pains and/or illnesses will probably become more obvious, and she will need support. It is also likely that, as she has been dedicating almost all her time to caring for her relative, she does not have a network around her and therefore does not have the support she would hope for when she needs it, which exacerbates her feeling of loneliness.

CLASS, ECONOMIC SITUATION

Loneliness can be felt regardless of socioeconomic situation. Having said that, poverty generates a host of loneliness risk factors, and in turn, loneliness can reduce the number of social opportunities of all kinds available.

Suffering from financial difficulties can lead to the presence of unhealthy habits (linked to energy poverty, for example), a lack of access to housing (and increased isolation when combined with a disability) and a lack of opportunities for social participation (and of a feeling of belonging), all of which are factors that increase one's risk of loneliness.

Poverty generates a field of urgent needs that can sometimes conceal loneliness or make its detection more difficult: in a situation where the coverage of other basic needs is lacking, loneliness remains silent, latent, disregarded.

Detection is closely linked to requests for basic services. Situations that do not pass through these circuits are more difficult to observe. This is why community work to multiply the number of people looking out for each other is fundamental in order to tackle situations of loneliness that poverty and socioeconomic difficulties hide.

Meanwhile, certain specific conditions that foster loneliness can be experienced by wealthy people: living in an uptown area with little sense of community, financial abuse of older people, etc. Furthermore, the stigma and shame associated with asking for help can be exacerbated when the person is wealthy, and in many cases, loneliness cannot be detected through the conventional channels (primary healthcare, for example).

Economic situation can intersect with other factors, such as gender, and have a direct impact on loneliness. There continues to be much more body-image pressure on women than on men. A lack of access to so-called 'beauty' services, such as hairdressers, beauty salons, etc., can affect many women and make it more difficult for them to establish intimate relationships. This phenomenon is sometimes accentuated in the case of younger women, in such a way that it becomes a direct cause of increased loneliness.

As indicated in the *Guia per incorporar la interseccionalitat a les polítiques locals* (Coll-Planas; Solà-Morales, 2019), **the location of each individual in the social structure is not simply the result of the various positions of oppression they accumulate added together** (an additive logic): instead, the Guide posits that intersections between axes generate specific situations. We therefore need to understand the qualitative differences between the ways of experiencing loneliness triggered by different oppressions.

This is a list of some of the strategies suggested by these authors that help us to gain a more practical, applied understanding of the intersectional perspective.

KEY STRATEGIES FOLLOWED TO APPLY INTERSECTIONALITY TO PUBLIC POLICIES

CONSIDERING COMPLEXITY WITHIN CATEGORIES	Starting out on a single axis of inequality, but emphasising the way in which the social group in question (women, migrants, young people, people with disabilities) is affected by other axes. This is a way of signalling groups' internal diversity and shining a light on parts of the group that had been ignored.
MOVING FORWARD WITH THE CREATION OF COMMON FRAMEWORKS	Establishing shared regulations and training that brings together various areas and spaces to collectivise information and carry out joint processes between different services (diagnoses, participatory processes, strategic plans, services, etc.).
WORKING FROM ISSUES, NOT IDENTITIES	This is a useful strategy for complex cases, for example those involving abuse of older people, female genital mutilation or live-in domestic workers. It could be a good method to ensure that staff in different services are on the same page and working together, without one axis prevailing over another.
ENCOURAGING THE CREATION OF COALITIONS IN CIVIL SOCIETY	In order to shift the dynamic with which each association mobilises in relation to an axis, one-off or regular spaces could be created where groupings different to those usually made can take place, so that issues that affect various groups, such as care, can be dealt with.
APPLYING INTERSECTIONAL MAINSTREAMING	Taking gender mainstreaming as a reference to develop joint strategies between different segmented policies, with a view to all spheres of public policy considering all axes and their intersections.

Source: *Guia per incorporar la interseccionalitat a les polítiques locals*
(Coll-Planas; Solà-Morales, 2019)

The concurrence of various discriminations in one person heightens risks and requires action that deals with the specificities generated by the accumulated inequalities.

The narrative or story of their life we gather from our interaction in an assistance context is key in order for us to understand how their situation of loneliness has been shaped and how they have dealt with it. It makes it easier to share the case among services and can be used as a reference to diagnose the situation and to design the action that must be taken with the person.

KEY IDEAS AND SUMMARY

The latest research into loneliness has provided data on its prevalence in different generations and helped us to analyse the phenomenon more longitudinally, throughout the life cycle.

The life cycle perspective offers a reference framework that can help us as public service professionals to understand the causes, consequences and domains of loneliness in a multidimensional way.

To view loneliness from the life cycle perspective is to recognise that the experience of loneliness can act in a cumulative, interactive way.

Loneliness has effects that shape the narrative of our life.

Moments of transition in life are decisive in terms of our experience of loneliness. If an individual feels lonely during one of the key transitions for their development, this can have an effect on their subsequent life trajectory.

In the 2020–2030 Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, the list of known sources or causes of the emergence of loneliness at different stages of life has been updated.

Overlapping oppression or discrimination can generate specific situations of inequality that lead people to feel lonely. That is why an intersectional perspective that considers diversity and the complexity of situations is required.

Loneliness can be presented, expressed and developed differently when various dimensions that exercise multiple inequalities on a person's life overlap.

The location of each individual in the social structure is not simply the result of the various positions of oppression they accumulate added together (an additive logic): instead, the intersections between axes generate specific situations. When dealing with loneliness, we therefore need to understand the qualitative differences between the ways of experiencing it triggered by different forms of oppression.
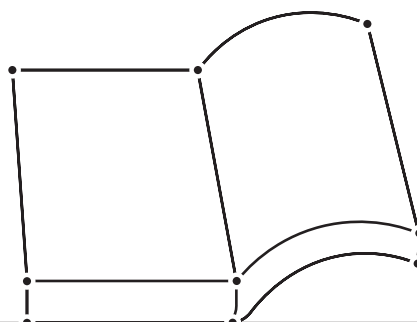
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