

‘The rise of living alone and loneliness in history’**K.D.M. Snell**

Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, Leicester, England, LE1 7RH

0116 2522763 (work), 0116 2708522 (home).

kdm@le.ac.uk**Abstract:**

This article connects two current debates: the rise of single-person households or of ‘solitaries’, and the so-called ‘loneliness epidemic’. It raises questions about how these are associated, via social-science literature on loneliness as a social, contextual and subjective experience, and findings in that literature about the relevance of lone-person households. The article is concerned to explore the history of living alone as a form of family structure, via analysis of European, North American and Japanese pre-industrial and industrial listings of inhabitants, and the post-1851 British censuses to 2011. It also does this cartographically via British mapping of lone-person households in 1851, 1881, 1911 and 2011. It documents dramatic rise across many countries in single-person households during the twentieth century, notably since the 1960s. Many pre-industrial settlements had no single-person households, and the average was around 5 percent of households. The current western proportions of such households (e.g. 31 percent in the UK) are wholly unprecedented historically, even reaching to 60 percent or more of households in some modern European and North American cities. The discussion examines this trend – which has very wide ramifications – and raises issues about its relevance for modern problems of loneliness as a social and welfare concern.

Keywords:

Solitaries; living alone; single-person households; loneliness; personal isolation; listings of inhabitants; the British census.

The rise of living alone and loneliness in history

K.D.M. Snell

'No previous human societies have supported large numbers of people who lived alone... we have no historical examples to learn from, no precedents to mimic or avoid. This makes understanding what it means to live in a society of singletons all the more important, and our first order of business is to analyse how we got here'.¹

The great extent of living alone in recent decades requires historical context and analysis. This article explores this and some of the implications for related issues, such as the issue of historical and present-day loneliness. It analyses listings and censuses to demonstrate the chronology, geography and unprecedented international rise of 'solitaries' in the twentieth century.² The themes of individualism, of isolation and loneliness of the individual, have been taken by many authors and artists as staples of modernity. The rise of living alone may be an aspect of this: historically unprecedented, accentuating over time, and perhaps contributing to what is now widely diagnosed as 'an epidemic of loneliness' or a 'loneliness time bomb'.³

There is a large modern sociological and philosophical literature on personal isolation, forms of 'alienation', and loneliness, and to discuss this literature would take one to Rousseau, de Tocqueville, Marx, Engels, Tönnies, Durkheim, Simmel, Sartre, Riesman, Colin Wilson, Putnam, Beck, Bauman, Ray Pahl, Paul Connerton, among many others. Such authors have theorised change, and considered the subject in relation to economic transition, industrialisation, ideas about 'community' or its absences, and the meanings of friendship.

The literature on loneliness is growing rapidly and showing considerable concern.⁴ It is itself largely a recent phenomenon. As McWhirter has argued, ‘Despite its pervasiveness... loneliness has only recently been described and treated as a unique phenomenon... as a unique clinical problem’.⁵ Loneliness may have adverse health effects comparable to smoking.⁶ It is consistently linked to increased incidence of heart attack, strokes, cancers, depression, anxiety, and premature death.⁷ It is associated with alcoholism, unhealthy diets, less exercise, sleep deprivation, drug abuse, Alzheimer’s disease, high blood pressure, accelerated ageing processes, and bulimia nervosa.⁸ It shares the contexts of suicide and has the same seasonal features.⁹ Robert Putnam argued that loneliness and lack of social integration and support in the US ‘represented one of the nation’s most serious public health challenges’.¹⁰

High rates of modern loneliness are widely reported. From the 1960s onwards, across a number of studies and cultures, between 30 to 50 percent of those surveyed report feeling lonely, and about 10-30 percent report being intensely lonely.¹¹ There has been little reduction in such survey figures, and in some cases they have worsened. UK doctors report patients asking: ‘Can you give me a cure for loneliness?’ They discuss in the *Lancet* whether this condition affecting ‘thousands’ of people is amenable to anti-depressants, and what they should do for patients ‘for whom time now stands empty as they wait in homes full of silence....It brings home to me the truth of this epidemic that we have on our hands – an epidemic of loneliness....The most difficult part is that I don’t know how to solve this, although I wish I could’.¹² These loneliness-related health and social problems have received much media attention, and the phrase an ‘epidemic of loneliness’ is frequently used.

Loneliness may be defined as suffering self-recognition of separateness. In this connection it is essential to distinguish two features. There is first the apparently ‘objective’ aspect: *alone-ness*. That is not the same as ‘loneliness’ or ‘subjective’ aloneness as felt and

experienced, which can occur among other people (for example in a city) or in family residential situations. Thus, ‘being alone does not necessarily mean being lonely’.¹³ Situational aloneness, or being in solitude, let alone desiring privacy, needs to be differentiated from subjective or temperamental feelings of loneliness, and these concepts themselves have many variants and cultural forms. Nevertheless, being alone often becomes loneliness: many modern studies of self-rated loneliness (widely using the UCLA Loneliness Scale or its European equivalents)¹⁴ and much historical evidence highlight a frequently close association between alone-ness and loneliness. In quantitative studies of subjective loneliness, lone living is almost always the strongest explanatory variable when analysing loneliness, often linked to allied conditions (for example, divorce or bereavement). The weight of scholarly opinion leans strongly this way,¹⁵ suggesting partial study of loneliness via the issue of living alone. The rise of living alone has also, whether rightly or wrongly, conceptually shaped ‘solitaries’ as the main perceived social problem of loneliness, which is a further reason for this condition to be examined.

In post-1945 British, European and North American research, loneliness consistently has certain correlates or associated social conditions. It results from a combination of personal factors and situations. It correlates with unhappiness and pessimism, and its study relates in key ways to the meaning of happiness.¹⁶ It is associated with widowhood or divorce.¹⁷ Self-rating assessments of loneliness correlate very highly with living alone, widowhood and bereavement. While loneliness is not the same as or equivalent to alone-ness, nevertheless strong links between living alone, its proximate causes, and loneliness are pervasively stressed in the research literature. It may be that the lonely live alone, or that living alone makes people lonely – and one can qualify such connectivity in many obvious ways. Yet whatever the causal links and undoubted exceptions this strong general association suggests a need for historical amplification via studies of living alone.

Loneliness opens up many historical and developmental questions. Many of these are influenced by psychological debates over whether the causes of such a condition are person-centred, situational/cultural, or social-system derived. These are complex debates which we cannot enter into here, though clearly they have implications for the scope of historical enquiry – just as historical answers have implications for the social-science debates. In what kinds of societies is loneliness more or less prevalent? Does the past show any trajectories, or stages, or particular forms of loneliness? Can one construct a chronological schema or historical framework against which to interpret shifts in the meanings and incidence of loneliness, incorporating for example significant watersheds such as the Black Death, or the Reformation, or the rise of Puritanism, or industrialisation, or rural out-migration and urbanisation, or the social changes after the Second World War, or the women's movements, or the first or second demographic transitions?¹⁸ The changing implications of differing forms of capitalism for loneliness remain unclear: atomistic migrant, wage-dependent individuals, and 'self-resilient' ideologies may render people especially prone to loneliness – however, trade and the evolution of markets promote human interactions and technologies that can diminish loneliness. These issues bear fundamentally upon questions concerning the relative merits or sustainability of varying capitalistic or economic systems. In comparative terms, is it the case that northern Europe, with predominant nuclear families, high migration, and shallow kin networks, has developed a culture that fosters isolation and loneliness?

In modern studies, using self-assessments of loneliness related to socio-economic and household factors, loneliness and living alone have high co-associations, as noted above. This theme therefore opens an avenue for historical research, one that does not discount many ways of qualifying this or wider academic interpretations of loneliness and historical evidential and study methods, all of which deserve full exploration. The empirical research for this article focuses on living alone largely because – after Peter Laslett *et al* – that is so

germane to where we are currently positioned historiographically.¹⁹ Related historical demographic questions involve issues such as divorce, re-marriage rates, widowhood, and loneliness risk aversion as incentivising marriage or other forms of kinship or friendship-related behaviour.

We know that extreme sex ratios and inevitable solitary living occurred in certain contexts or periods, often producing bitter personal testimonies of loneliness. One thinks of inter-war Europe following high male mortality, or regions like west Wales or west Ireland,²⁰ with their high gender-specific out-migration. There have been extreme sex ratios in migrant-receiving areas such as the Welsh industrial valleys, or in areas of highly gender-specific migration such as the nineteenth-century American frontier, or in many emigrant-receiving countries such as Australia and New Zealand. These sex ratios contributed to lone inhabitancy and ‘solitaries’, to an array of social problems, and to a literature and corpus of unquestionably lonely emigrant letters and diaries.²¹

What, therefore, have been the historical trends and characteristics of living alone? The evidence shows striking growth in single-person households. The changing incidence of solitaries in the past is presented in the Appendix, which I have analysed from listings and censuses, or collated from existing literature, giving indicative places and settlement types, including international comparisons arranged chronologically from across Europe, North America, Japan and Britain. The most significant data presented in the Appendix pertains to the percentage of households that were solitaries in each settlement (the final column). ‘Solitaries’ are households of one person, whether widowed, single, or of unknown marital status.²² There is a stark settlement and global rise across time, especially during the twentieth century and most notably since the 1960s. This is further graphically demonstrated in Figure 1, which draws on the data detailed in the Appendix to create a scatter chart

(although this must, of course, be seen as indicative only, given that the size and geography of the units being plotted here vary enormously).

Figure 1. Solitaries (single-person households) as % of all households, by time and place. Sources: see the Appendix.

The direction and pace of change is staggering, and brings many questions. It is found regardless of country and place. In a hundred early modern English communities, as reported by Peter Laslett, 5.6 per cent of households were solitaries, comprising about one percent of the population.²³ Some of my analyses encompass his listings, plus many others for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The earlier figures are very much as Laslett indicated, including for settlements that he did not examine. The places analysed above using nineteenth-century censuses give similar figures throughout that century. Birstall in 1891, for example, an English (Leicestershire) boot and shoe industrial village, had 6.1 per cent of its households as solitaries.

Over time, the proportion of households which were solitaries remained fairly steady between the early modern period and the 1910s, with no detectable trend.²⁴ Rarely before then does the percentage rise above 10 percent, and some of the cases where this is so are Japanese and culturally very different. In Britain, industrialisation did not have much effect on the frequency of solitaries. Industrial settlements like Preston, Birstall, Shepshed, Calverley, Norwich (many weavers still worked there in 1851, including female weavers) had

proportions solitary that were similar to English rural pre-industrial settlements, or for very rural nineteenth-century settlements.

One-person households in Britain and the other countries covered here rose from a pre-1911 unweighted average of about 5 percent, to about 17 percent in the 1960s, or 15 percent in England and Wales.²⁵ This traverses different regional and national cultures. It represents a significant rise in solitaires. The growth came in the twentieth century, after about 1911, and more so from 1931 onwards.²⁶ The greatest rise, because it broke entirely with historical precedent, came from the 1960s. In the UK, by the 2011 census 31 per cent of households were solitary-person, comprising as many as 8,086,989 persons. This has especially affected the elderly, though the fastest rate of growth of single-living has been for those aged 25-44, an age group in which men predominate among solo-living households in most countries.

This UK proportion is now much the same as for the Netherlands and Germany. In Norway the overall figure is higher at 40 per cent. In Sweden, over 47 per cent of households are now single-person,²⁷ that country's international lead clearly apparent by 1980 (when it was 33%).²⁸ In Paris, over half the households are now single persons, while in Stockholm this figure is now over 60 per cent, perhaps the highest for a whole city.²⁹ The capital cities (for example, Paris, Stockholm, London or Tokyo) frequently have the highest proportion of single-person households in each country. In Japan, just over 30 per cent of households are solitaires, and the figure is well above that in Japanese cities.³⁰ The highest incidences of recent living alone (*c.* 2010, in descending order) are Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Austria, Estonia, Belgium, Japan, Iceland, France, Slovakia, and the UK. The lowest are countries such as India, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, China (respectively at 4-10% of households).³¹ The highest include many north-western European countries which are described by historical demographers as having in earlier

centuries relatively late marriage, neolocal residence, significant proportions never marrying (with economic opportunities for single people), rarity of joint household systems, nuclear family dominance, and sophisticated public welfare supports.³² By comparison, historic joint household systems characterise countries (such as India, China) with low percentages now living alone. The north-west European household formation systems were not globally unique;³³ yet in cultural terms these countries, with their subsequent fertility declines, extended but gendered life expectancies, and twentieth-century growth of two-person households, have become conspicuously vulnerable to nuclear-family break-up and its social consequences.

In the USA, single-person households are now 27 per cent of households, about one in seven of the US adult population. In many American cities, such as Atlanta, Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis or Denver, over 40 per cent of households comprise a single person. Parts of many American cities, such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, or New York, very much exceed this. Indeed in the U.S. 2010 Census in Midtown Manhattan (Census Tract 119) single-person households were an extraordinary 94% of all households.³⁴ That commercial-district figure was rivalled by Downtown Los Angeles in 2010 (Census Tract 2063), also at 94%.³⁵ The phenomenon is not limited to the supposedly most individualistic or self-reliant cultures, although 32.7 million Americans now live alone, compared to 27.2 million in 2000. The number of people aged 18-34 living alone in the USA is now ten times higher than in 1950.³⁶ Whether in the USA, Europe or elsewhere, this rise in living alone spans the age ranges, it is not confined to the elderly. These solitaries are enormously numerous compared to past history, or to the mid-twentieth century. Their proportions are completely unprecedented.

It is extraordinary, to current thinking, to see in the Appendix British settlements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where there were no solitaries whatever. Dunsford in

Devon (1821), for example, had 118 inhabited houses and a population of 819, but not a single solitary person. Its poor house had five people (aged between 24 and 66) who appear not to have any immediate family of their own. It is probable that some persons, notably elderly men, found themselves in parish poor houses or post-1834 workhouses rather than as solitaires in separate houses, partly because of weak or unsupportive kinship networks. This raises issues of welfare policy towards solitaires, in possible contexts of housing shortage.³⁷ Other places in the Appendix had no solitaires: Sockbridge, Coston, Ardleigh, Bradfield, Lower Hardres, or in France, Longuenesse, or in Hungary, Kölked. Austrian historians report ‘hardly any solitary people in country districts’ in the nineteenth century.³⁸ If the British historical figures were extrapolated to all ancient parishes today, one would now be seeing something in the order of one thousand to two thousand parishes with no solitaires. Such a situation is inconceivable: no doubt every single parish in modern Britain contains solitaires.

In early modern British listings, and throughout the nineteenth century, it is evident that many solitaires were widows or widowers, following nuclear family disruption. The age profile of solitaires in listings rises between the ages of 60 and 80, notably for female solitaires. This is of course true of subsequent demography.³⁹ Nevertheless, solitaires were found in steady numbers aged between 20 and 60. It is also notable that large proportions of solitaires, especially supposedly under-reported women,⁴⁰ were given occupations in occupationally-specific listings and nineteenth-century censuses, as for example the solitary female weavers in Norwich in 1851.

There is a marked geography of solitaires today in England and Wales, with western, northern or remoter areas, like Westmorland, and the cities, featuring high incidences. This is shown in Figure 2.⁴¹

Figure 2. Lone-person households in 2011, as % of households.

Source: Carole Austen, ONS. The darkness of tones are respectively single-person households as 32.2+; 30–32.2; 28.5–30; 26.9–28.5; 0–26.9 percent of all households.

High incidences obtain in Wales, notably the Welsh language heartlands of *Cymru Gymraig* (for example, Gwynedd, 35.3%). Retirement areas show people most vulnerable to solitariness: the English south-west (Cornwall, 30.1%; west Somerset, 33.4%), the Isle of Wight (32.7%), and the English south coast. There are high proportions in the north of England, retirement areas but also featuring de-industrialised out-migration of the young, as from east Durham. Some such Welsh and northern English areas have cultural reputations almost as ecological niches for loneliness. Many urban areas (showing as small dots on the map) are in the highest band of lone-person households (over 32% of households): London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Hartlepool, Liverpool, Manchester, Hull, Nottingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Oxford, Norwich, Eastbourne, Bournemouth, Exeter, and so on. There are significantly lower figures in the rural areas of the Home Counties and south midlands, east or south of Weymouth, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Lincoln and Norwich (25-29%). In Scotland (not obtainable for Figure 2), single-person households were the least common form of household in 1961 (14% per cent of all households). By 2011, they were the most common household type (35%), highest in the urban areas, notably Glasgow (43.0%) and Edinburgh, and then in the Outer Hebrides and the Orkneys, and in southern Scotland south of and including Angus, Perth and Kinross, and Argyll and Bute.⁴² Using another measure, the mapping of households of one person aged over 65 shows strong location to the west and north of the English Home Counties, beyond the circular commuting zone of London, which also coincides with the geographical incidence of ill health, a strong factor in loneliness.⁴³

Such geography is less apparent in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. For example, the Appendix includes seven listings from the 1787 ‘Westmorland census’, which that county’s Quarter Session magistrates ordered constables to conduct.⁴⁴ These listings show quite ‘normal’ proportions of solitaries (0.0 – 9.8%) for the late eighteenth century or early modern England. Nor do the urban areas show higher proportions. It is hard to detect any regional variations in the historical listings data for different places.

Figure 3. Solitaries in Britain in 1851, as % of households.

Source: K. Schürer and E. Higgs, Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM); 1851-1911 [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], April 2014. SN: 7481.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, mapping of the nineteenth-century British censuses displays geographical patterns, albeit quite different to those of modern Britain. Figure 3 shows the 1851 distribution of solitaries as percentages of all households, by parish. Solitaries are again defined here as single persons without residential lodgers, servants or apprentices. There is little distinct English and Welsh geography, less so than in France, notably for ‘la géographie de la solitude féminine’,⁴⁶ (by which the author meant the geography of women living alone). Nevertheless, the Scottish highlands clearly have relatively higher proportions of solitaries, even if the large sizes of parish there (as in many other upland areas) tend to exaggerate the cartographic impression of this. As in France, this gives us the clue to the rest of the country: areas of out-migration and emigration more often featured solitaries, because of family remnants left behind. West Wales, the North Riding, east Somerset, and mid-nineteenth-

century low wage English regions such as Norfolk and Wiltshire, all are noticeable in this regard.

Figure 4 gives the equivalent British data for 1881. It shows accentuation of the 1851 regional pattern, a banding developing to the east of the English arable-pastoral east-west division, compatible again with rural out-migration, the latter being clearly marked in Ceredigion and much of rural or highland Scotland. This pattern becomes all the more marked in Figure 5, for 1911 (data are not available for Scotland).

Figure 4. Solitaries in Britain in 1881, as % of households.

Source: K. Schürer and E. Higgs, Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM); 1851-1911 [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], April 2014. SN: 7481.

Figure 5. Solitaries in England and Wales in 1911, as % of households.

Source: K. Schürer and E. Higgs, Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM); 1851-1911 [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], April 2014. SN: 7481.

In the cartography of the census data for the entire period 1851-1911 one notices the relative lack of solitaries in the most densely populated areas (the south Welsh valleys, the Edinburgh to Glasgow and south Lancashire to west Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire urban-industrial belts, the English industrial north-east, Birmingham and the Black Country, and the London region). This is related to urban over-crowding and lower age structures. Leaving aside the Fens (where isolated farms, high fertility, and arable labour shortages appear to have conduced to the retention of household labour), this cartography of solitaries shows an inverse relationship to population densities. This is unlike the current British situation. Solitaries were more rural hitherto – now they are much more commonly urban in location. However, the western, south-western, coastal, and northern rural patterns of residential isolation are striking today too, linked to structures of youth out-migration, retirement, and broken nuclear families. Furthermore, the maps show England and Wales becoming progressively more ‘alone’, an indicative trend now detectable from as early as 1851-1911. Even so, the darkest toned areas for these 1851-1911 maps still represent relatively low incidence of solitariness compared to today.

There are many inter-linked causes of the growth of solitaries, and in such a complex interplay there are optimist and pessimist interpretations. Among the causes have been major shifts in demographic structures – lengthening life expectancies, changing marriage patterns and lessening remarriage, the decline in the birth rate, shifts in childlessness, changing mean age and duration of maternity, increasing divorce – along with rising prosperity, women’s rights, decline of the family as a primary producer, decay of live-in service, the communications revolution, urbanisation, higher education growth, or individualistic ideologies. Rising real incomes enabled more people to live alone by choice, in effect buying their independence if they wish that.⁴⁷ This has clearly often been allied to increasing demands for privacy, which has an interesting relation to loneliness. The structural loneliness

of affluence is a nascent issue.⁴⁸ The feminist movements had major effects, notably since the mid-1970s, undermining cultural constraints against younger women living alone,⁴⁹ increasing female participation rates, and bringing legal reforms affecting working rights. In many British cities, notably from the 1980s, there has been remarkable increase of single managerial and professional women living alone.⁵⁰ The history of the ‘full-time housewife’ may have been short, and the implications of disruption to what some economists refer to as an earlier marital calculus of emotional-economic exchange remain unclear.⁵¹ It is possible, for example, that rising women’s participation rates have relieved much feminine loneliness, while accentuating that of men – though such arguments (and terminologies) could unfold in many ways. Most recently, the increase of ‘living apart together’ (LAT) relationships, which involve about 10 percent of adults in Britain, is having a significant influence upon the growth of conventionally defined ‘solitaries’.⁵² So are a variety of other or overlapping mutable socio-cultural domestic arrangements, the emotional micro-geographies and hybridity of which often blur conventional household boundaries (for example, strategies of the growing numbers of single-parent families, non-heterosexual living arrangements, friendship substitutions for family, and so on).

In some regards we have been here before, notably in relation to the demographics of isolation. One thinks, for example, of the much debated British spinster or ‘surplus women problem’ of the Victorian and inter-war periods,⁵³ compared to age-specific marriage rates by 1971. And historical demographers familiar with crisis mortality, prudential checks, emigration, the dependency ratio, or extreme sex ratios can add to this example.⁵⁴ Many such modern predicaments are not unprecedented, though the extent of living alone now surely is. However, the explanation needs to focus on the main changes highlighted, implicating many elements of the ‘second demographic transition’.⁵⁵ There has been a steep rise in the proportions of young unmarried women in almost all countries, and rising proportions of

women never married.⁵⁶ Modern marriage rates are now at historically low levels, for example in the UK and US falling notably since *c.* 1970,⁵⁷ while mean ages at first marriage are high. In England and Wales in 2009 they were 32.1 (male) and 29.9 (female). These have risen steeply since the mid-1960s, when respective ages were 23 and 21,⁵⁸ and especially since the mid-1980s, though rates of unmarried co-habitation have markedly increased. The birth rate was in long-term decline, and then in the UK it fell steeply from 1964, while in Europe it has been notably low in recent decades, especially in countries like Germany, Italy, and in Russia and Eastern Europe.⁵⁹ Fertility restraint occurred later rather than earlier in marriages, especially for younger marriages, producing extended ‘empty nest’ predicaments.⁶⁰ Childlessness (a controversial term itself, arousing gendered issues of agency and leisure preferences) has risen across many countries in recent decades.⁶¹ Children are now, at least in some accounts, discussed as risky assets or liabilities, a source of generational problems, an obstacle to careers and other forms of fulfilment.⁶² With the falling birth rate has come declining kin connectivity and potential, despite omnipresent technologies of travel. The unmarried as a percentage of the older population have been increasing, and will probably continue to increase, as a result of divorce, widowhood, and extended life expectancy.⁶³

The rise of solitaires is not only a manifestation of ageing. In the USA, for example, about 5 million of those living alone are young adults aged 18-34, which is the fastest growing group of solitaires. Over 15 million solitaires are middle-aged adults aged 35-64. Those aged 65 or more comprise about 11 million people.⁶⁴ In most countries older systems of young adult group living (service, live-in apprentices, bothies, lodgings or ‘digs’, dormitories, and so on) have declined,⁶⁵ only partially replaced by some forms of student living.⁶⁶ This has repercussions both for the young, and for the older population with whom such people often hitherto resided.

Two-person households have been rising steeply over the past century,⁶⁷ and one needs to think of solitary-person households as often arising from the failure (through divorce, separation or death) of such two-person households. This is especially pronounced in north-west Europe and emigration-related cultures, and (arguably like loneliness) it is less marked in countries featuring joint household systems. Linking this to the quandary of loneliness is an extension of what the English historical demographers Peter Laslett and Richard Smith termed ‘nuclear family hardship’: the problems that occur (notably for orphans, widows, widowers, the elderly) when the nuclear family is disrupted, especially in wage-dependent historical contexts with a high dependency rate, in a relatively kin-weak culture such as England and many western societies, in which marriage normatively involves a separate household.⁶⁸ The decline of live-in servants, apprentices and lodgers accentuates this effect. Compounding this issue, in many areas of England from the mid-nineteenth century indices of settlement surname diversity have risen. That is to say, in many communities the ratio of separate surnames to local population has increased, markedly so in the twentieth century. This is indicative of people becoming less inter-related, largely because of migration and falling birth rates. Local kin availability is significantly lower than historically was the case.⁶⁹

Furthermore, divorce has risen markedly. Socio-economic changes, and issues of work-life balance and distances, have put huge strains upon marriage. In England and Wales there were only 580 divorces in 1911, 3,764 in 1931, 28,767 in 1951, and then large rises after the mid-1960s, facilitated by the 1969 and 1971 Divorce Acts, to a peak of 165,018 in 1993. Since then there has been a decline, to 117,558 in 2011.⁷⁰ In 1936, 6 per cent of marriages in Britain would divorce by their twentieth anniversary; now over a third is expected to do so. Movements in the UK divorce rate are very similar to Denmark, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Increases of a lesser magnitude are apparent in Italy,

France and Austria. In an aggregation of 18 European countries, the divorce rate has risen most sharply from 1970 to 1986, and has continued to rise since.⁷¹ Strong correlations have repeatedly been found between marital break-up, living alone and self-rated loneliness, and so such changes are obviously suggestive for loneliness as a societal experience.

Let us return to the long-term disposing factors and structures. In six English settlements between 1599 and 1796, 1.8 per cent of elderly men and 9.1 per cent of elderly women (of 60 years and over) were living entirely alone.⁷² Data for Puddletown in Dorset (1851, 1861 and 1871, with an average population of 1,292), showed between 8 and 24 per cent of elderly people (aged 60 or above) living as solitaires.⁷³ Such historic figures were very low compared to today. The larger numbers of children in the past, lower life expectancies and early widowhood while children were still at home, higher widower than widow re-marriage rates, and prevalent lodgers and live-in servants provide the main explanations. Laslett commented that 're-creating a conjugal union by taking another age-mate for a spouse as a remedy for solitude in later life was not characteristic of earlier English society'.⁷⁴ Indeed, this could compromise the social standing of some widows. Widowers remarried to a greater extent than widows. Cultural and economic factors and differential life-expectancy led to higher proportions of widows than widowers being solitary.⁷⁵ Older single men were more likely to have servants or to be accepted into the households of others, tending more often to live as lodgers or in institutions than older women.

Industrialisation had little effect on such figures for elderly solitaires. The main changes came much later, notably since *c.* 1960. 34 percent of the elderly (aged 65 or more) were living alone in England and Wales by the twenty-first century.⁷⁶ Even more striking figures emerge for the non-married elderly. The percentage of these who were solitaires moved from 21.5 percent (1684-1796), to 43.1 percent (1962), to 70.4 percent (1980/1).

Again, the relatively recent nature of this comparison emerges. Among the married elderly, there has been a correspondingly strong shift to living with the spouse only (without children or others), from 43.9 percent (1684-1796), to 67.4 percent (1962), to 83.6 percent (1980-1).⁷⁷

These have been European phenomena, but the trends are particularly marked in Britain. Laslett commented upon an ‘enormous change’ in the living arrangements of the elderly, accentuating ‘to inordinate lengths’ the longer-term tendency of the nuclear or isolated family to predominate. This growing residential isolation of the elderly became pronounced during 1950-1990.⁷⁸ Solitaries have become by 2011 especially conspicuous in retirement areas: Hastings (38.3%), Eastbourne (36.2%), Cheltenham (34.8%), and so on. This is a feature of widowhood within the longer-term pattern of small nuclear families.

Internationally speaking, these ‘atomising’ phenomena, as with all forms of single-person households, are now most extreme in the north-west European countries, modern America, and Japan.⁷⁹ A long-term north-western European and emigration-transmitted culture of separate households upon marriage, of simple household systems, with high migration and relatively weak kin connectivity, has increased personal isolation, especially among the elderly. The north European marriage and household patterns, with dominant small nuclear families, as analysed by many international demographers since John Hajnal, have come through history to eventuate in high incidence of solitaries. Ideologies of self-reliance have left a residue of nucleated family pride which is not easily discarded. Changing modern social, economic and demographic circumstances – notably high divorce, extended life expectancy, falling marriage and birth rates, weak kin connectivity, rising living standards affecting housing options, and regional population shifts due to de-industrialisation – have conduced to the present-day prevalence and perceptions of solitaries.

Given the contexts and explanatory variables of loneliness widely reported in social-science studies, this growth of solitaries would have intensified the self-rated loneliness seen as ‘the loneliness epidemic’ and ‘time bomb’ of modern society. Yet while the trends and cultural dispositions are readily identifiable, building upon traditions of family-structural analysis, it must be emphasised that such implications are only part of a much fuller assessment of the history of loneliness. Living alone does not necessarily conduce to loneliness; there are complex causal ties involved, coupled to modern and historic psychological and sociological issues; and loneliness is an emotion often felt within residually shared familial arrangements. The frequent interface between aloneness and loneliness, while strongly emphasised in quantitative analyses, is only one among many lines of enquiry.

If loneliness is a universal human experience,⁸⁰ of long historic standing, the intensity of which is socially produced and greatly affected by a host of social and cultural factors,⁸¹ such as family structures, then the agenda facing historians of this emotion – its structural contexts and many expressions and historical psychologies – is indeed a large one.⁸² Further, in political studies, an agenda is opening up that asks to what extent political structures engender loneliness.⁸³ Modernism for some is defined by loneliness, which has been so salient in its artistic expressions, and its social sciences have in various ways been highly preoccupied with it and by analysis of the individual in society. Even so, while the growth of psychology long predates the ‘loneliness epidemic’, it has perhaps made people more aware of loneliness and given them a language with which to express it. (It is striking, however, that loneliness is as yet a category rarely mentioned or indexed in major psychiatry textbooks). Evidently, loneliness and living alone are not equivalent situations, and it has not been my intention to treat them as such. Nor of course do I wish to suggest that loneliness emerges with modernity, however defined, or is correspondingly represented in any simplistic way by

‘solitaries’. I have been concerned rather to suggest lateral links between these structural and subjective conditions, justified by their strong associations in the analytical literature, as in much qualitative historical evidence. It is clear from this article that the great modern increase of living alone may be one important factor bearing upon loneliness, just as that rise bears so crucially upon a host of welfare, housing, planning, demographic and other issues. The fuller causes and effects of the growth of ‘solitaries’ thus demand extensive attention from historians.

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¹ E. Klinenberg, *Going Solo. The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* (2012, London, 2014), 21. A.S. Franklin, ‘On loneliness’, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 91, 4 (2009), 347, describes the growth of single-person households and single-person living as ‘an entirely new phenomenon’.

² ‘Singleton’ is the preferred term in American discussion, though it also refers to married status (being unmarried) as well as living alone, while my preferred term ‘solitaries’ predominates in UK usage, meaning a household comprising one person. (I am not here

focusing upon singleness and its extensive literature, interesting though the relationships are between being single, being alone, and loneliness). A ‘household’ I define as ‘a person living alone or a group of people who have the address as their only or main residence and who either share one meal a day or share the living accommodation’; or, more simply, a set of people who live and eat together or a person living alone. This combines housing and housekeeping definitions of household, and follows ONS [J. Beaumont], *Households and Families. Social Trends*, 41 (London, 2011), 3, 22, and a wide social science literature. As is stated in R. Wall, ‘Leaving home and living alone: an historical perspective’, *Population Studies*, 43, 3 (1989), 388, people living alone are more readily identified and defined across countries and time than many other household forms. Nevertheless, on undoubted complexities and ‘fuzziness’ of definition (regular visitors, overnight stayers, one-person dwellings with communal eating, or other blurred boundaries), see L. Jamieson and R. Simpson, *Living Alone. Globalization, Identity and Belonging* (Basingstoke, 2013), 4-7; R. Hall, P.E. Ogden and C. Hill, ‘Living alone: evidence from England and Wales and France for the last two decades’, in S. McRae (ed.), *Changing Britain. Families and Households in the 1990s* (Oxford, 1999), 267-8.

³ C. Killeen, ‘Loneliness: an epidemic in modern society’, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28, 4 (1998), 762-70; I. Kar-Purkayastha, ‘An epidemic of loneliness’, *Lancet*, 376 (2010), 2114-5; H. Khaleeli, ‘Britain’s loneliness epidemic’, *Guardian*, 22 January 2013. The term has had wide media coverage. The ‘time bomb’ phraseology is from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), using data from the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing, showing 34% of people aged 52 or over as feeling lonely, with much higher percentages among those living alone, the widowed, separated, older people, and those in poor health. J. Bingham, ‘Loneliness haunts the over-50s’, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2013, 11; J.T. Cacioppo, N.A. Christakis and

J.H. Fowler, 'Alone in the crowd: the structure and spread of loneliness in a large social network', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, 6 (2009), 984.

⁴ Mental Health Foundation (J. Griffin), *The Lonely Society?* (London, 2010), 4, 11; L. Andersson, 'Loneliness research and interventions: a review of the literature', *Ageing and Mental Health*, 2 (1998), 268.

⁵ B.T. McWhirter, 'Loneliness: a review of current literature, with implications for counselling and research', *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 68 (1990), 417, and see his references.

⁶ K. Yang and C. Victor, 'Age and loneliness in 25 European nations', *Ageing and Society*, 31, 8 (2011), 1369, and the studies reported there; Mental Health Foundation, *op.cit.*, 4; E. Klinenberg, 'I want to be alone: the rise and rise of solo living', *Guardian*, 30 March 2012.

⁷ Mental Health Foundation, *op.cit.*; D. Perlman and L.A. Peplau, 'Loneliness research: a survey of empirical findings', in L.A. Peplau and S. Goldston (eds), *Preventing the Harmful Consequences of Severe and Persistent Loneliness* (Rockville, MD, 1984); McWhirter, *op.cit.*, 417-8; C.R. Victor and A. Bowling, 'A longitudinal analysis of loneliness among older people in Great Britain', *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 146, 3 (2012), 325-6; R.S. Tilvis, V. Laitala, P.E. Routasalo and K.H. Pitkälä, 'Suffering from loneliness indicates significant mortality risk of older people', *Journal of Aging Research* (2011); S. Shiovitz-Ezra and L. Ayalon, 'Situational versus chronic loneliness as risk factors for all-cause mortality', *International Psychogeriatrics*, 22, 3 (2010), 455-62; A. Rokach, 'Coping with loneliness among the terminally ill', *Social Indicators Research*, 82, 3 (2007);

C.R. Victor, S.J. Scambler, A. Bowling and J. Bond, 'The prevalence of, and risk factors for, loneliness in later life: a survey of older people in Great Britain', *Ageing and Society*, 25, 6 (2005); L.F. Berkman and S.L. Syme, 'Social networks, host resistance, and mortality: a nine-year follow-up of Alameda County residents', *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 109, 2 (1979), 186-204; W.H. Jones, J. Rose, and D. Russell, 'Loneliness and social anxiety', in H. Leitenberg (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Evaluation Anxiety* (New York, 1990), 247-66; L. Spencer and R. Pahl, *Rethinking Friendship. Hidden Solidarities Today* (Princeton, 2006), 28; Yang and Victor, *op.cit.*, 1368-9. M.J. Essex and S. Nam, 'Marital status and loneliness among older women: the differential importance of close family and friends', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 49, 1 (1987), 102-3, place their emphasis upon ill health leading to loneliness.

⁸ J.T. Cacioppo and W. Patrick, *Loneliness. Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York, 2008), 37-51; Cacioppo *et al*, 'Alone in the crowd', *op.cit.*, 977-8.

⁹ H. Brock and A. Rokach, 'Coping with loneliness', *Journal of Psychology*, 132, 1 (1998), 1-2; McWhirter, *op.cit.*, 417. On high suicide rates among those living alone in London, E. Stengel, *Suicide and Attempted Suicide* (1964, Harmondsworth, 1973), 28-9, linking suicide to social isolation and supposed anonymity of urban life: 'As a rule the suicide rates are proportionate to the size of the city'.

¹⁰ R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000), 326-32.

¹¹ C.R. Victor and A. Bowling, 'A longitudinal analysis of loneliness among older people in Great Britain', *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 146, 3 (2012), 313, 320; Brock and Rokach, *op.cit.*, 1-6; Essex and Nam, *op.cit.*, 93-5; C.R. Victor, S.J. Scambler, A. Bowling, and J. Bond, 'The prevalence of, and risk factors for, loneliness in later life: a survey of older people in Great Britain', *Ageing and Society*, 25, 3 (2005), 364-70; N. Bradburn, *The Structure of Psychological Well-being* (Chicago, 1969).

¹² See the deeply humane account by Kar-Purkayastha, *op.cit.*

¹³ A. Rokach, 'Alienation and domestic abuse: how abused women cope with loneliness', *Social Indicators Research*, 78 (2006), 334.

¹⁴ On modern loneliness measurement, allowing subjective loneliness to be related to other variables, see D. Russell, 'UCLA loneliness scale (version 3): reliability, validity, and factor structure', *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66, 1 (1996), 20-40. At least four main scales are used, producing very similar results. These are widely recognised in the Social Science Citation Index.

¹⁵ C.R. Victor and K. Yang, 'The prevalence of loneliness among adults: a case study of the United Kingdom', *Journal of Psychology*, 146, 1 (2012), 95, 97; C. Segrin, T.J. Burke and M. Dunivan, 'Loneliness and poor health within families', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 29, 5 (2012), 597-8, 605-6; A. Shankar, A. McMunn, J. Banks, and A. Steptoe, 'Loneliness, social isolation, and behavioral and biological health indicators in older adults', *Health Psychology*, 30, 4 (2011), 377-85; H.Z. Lopata, 'Loneliness: forms and components', *Social Problems*, 17, 2 (1969); J. de Jong-Gierveld, 'A review of loneliness: concepts and

definitions, determinants and consequences', *Review in Clinical Gerontology*, 8, 1 (1998), 75; Victor and Bowling, *op.cit.*, 314, 322, 323, 326-7; L.A. Peplau, 'Loneliness research: basic concepts and findings', in I.G. Sarason and B.R. Sarason (eds), *Social Support. Theory, Research and Applications* (Dordrecht, 1985), 272; Perlman and Peplau, *op.cit.*, 34; Brock and Rokach, *op.cit.*; A. Rokach and H. Brock, 'Loneliness: a multidimensional experience', *Psychology: a Journal of Human Behaviour*, 34, 1 (1997); Essex and Nam, *op.cit.*; E. Dugan and V.R. Kivett, 'The importance of emotional and social isolation to loneliness among very old rural adults', *Gerontologist*, 34:3 (1994), 341-5; C.A. Rayburn, 'Loneliness and the single, the widowed, and the divorced', in S.M. Natale (ed.), *Psychotherapy and the Lonely Patient* (1986, London, 2013), 29-46; S. Berg, D. Mellström, G. Persson and A. Svanborg, 'Loneliness in the Swedish aged', *Journal of Gerontology*, 36, 3 (1981), 344, 348; Cacioppo *et al*, *op.cit.*, 978, 980; V.A. Karn, *Retiring to the Seaside* (London, 1977), 90-2; J. Tunstall, *Old and Alone. A Sociological Study of Old People* (1966, London, 1971), 20, 22, 86, 88-90, 92-3, 95, 97, 108, 111, 142-5, 179, 181.

¹⁶ R. Layard, *Happiness. Lessons from a New Science* (London, 2005).

¹⁷ W.H. Jones and M.D. Carver, 'Adjusting and coping implications of loneliness', in C.R. Snyder and D.R. Forsyth (eds), *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology. The Healthy Perspective* (New York, 1991), 404-5; D.A. West, R. Kellner and M. Moore-West, 'The effects of loneliness: a review of the literature', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 27, 4 (1986), 351-63; V.R. Kivett, 'Loneliness and the rural widow', *The Family Coordinator*, 27 (1978), 389-394.

¹⁸ The ‘first demographic transition’ refers to downward shifts in death and birth rates associated with modern medicine, public health and economic development (for example in Britain most notably from around the mid-nineteenth century). The ‘second demographic transition’ means the factors underpinning large increases in the numbers of households in a context of falling population growth rates. On the latter, see in particular R. Lesthaeghe, ‘The unfolding story of the second demographic transition’, *Population and Development Review*, 36, 2 (2011).

¹⁹ See especially P. Laslett and R. Wall (eds), *Household and Family in Past Time* (1972, Cambridge, 1974); P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, 1977); P. Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life. The Emergence of the Third Age* (London, 1989).

²⁰ On western Irish sex ratios, and their consequences for loneliness and isolated men, see N. Scheper-Hughes, *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics. Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (Berkeley, 1979), 37-40, 54-7, and 38 on wider rural and urban sex ratios compared across Europe. Ireland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, Austria and Portugal in particular have abnormally high ratios of males per 100 females in rural areas, given exodus of rural women. See also H. Brody, *Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland* (London, 1973). Comparable situations exist in other countries, notably in rural Japan.

²¹ M. Fairburn, ‘Local community or atomised society? The social structure of nineteenth-century New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 16, 2 (1982), 146-165; M. Fairburn, ‘Vagrants, ‘folk devils’ and nineteenth-century New Zealand as a boundless society’,

Historical Studies, 21 (1985), 495-514. One author saw fit to characterise an entire nation in her best-selling book title: E. Hill, *The Great Australian Loneliness* (1940, Melbourne, 1963).

²² For further definition of ‘solitaries’ and ‘household’, see note 2.

²³ P. Laslett, ‘Introduction: the history of the family’, in Laslett and Wall (eds), *Household and Family in Past Time*, *op.cit.*, 77; Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, *op.cit.*, 199. R.

Wall rightly commented with regard to women living alone that it is ‘interesting that the differences between individual settlements are not more marked’. R. Wall, ‘Woman alone in English society’, *Annales de démographie historique* (1981), 303.

²⁴ In that period, excluding a few extreme outliers, there is no significant correlation between a place’s total households and the percentage solitary.

²⁵ See also P. Laslett, ‘Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century’, in Laslett and Wall, *Household and Family*, *op.cit.*, 143-5.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 143.

²⁷ Klinenberg, ‘I want to be alone’ *op.cit.*; Jamieson and Simpson, *op.cit.*, 34, give 49% for Sweden in *c.* 2010; see also *ibid.*, 44-8. For cross-European data for *c.* 1946-80, see Wall, ‘Leaving home’, *op.cit.*, 377, showing the same increases that I document for that period (from 11% to 22% for England, Wales and Scotland, 1950-80), and some national contrasts in *c.* 1980: notably lower percentages solitary for southern Europe (for example, Spain, Gibraltar, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia), and higher percentages in for

example Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, or Norway. The UK was mid-range in c. 1980, while Sweden (33%) was highest.

²⁸ L. Roussel, 'Les ménages d'une personne: l'évolution récente', *Population (France)*, 38, 6 (1983), 999-1000.

²⁹ R. Hall, P.E. Ogden and C. Hill, 'The pattern and structure of one-person households in England and Wales and France', *International Journal of Population Geography*, 3, 2 (1997), 176; E. Klinenberg, 'One's a crowd', *The New York Times, Sunday Review*, 4 February 2012; and higher still for inner-city Stockholm: D. Popenoe, *Disturbing the Nest. Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies* (1988, New Brunswick, 2012), 175.

³⁰ Editorial, 'Living alone in Tokyo', *The Japan Times*, 25 March 2012.

³¹ Jamieson and Simpson, *op.cit.*, 34-5; and for rank order stability, see Roussel, *op.cit.*, esp. the 18 country data (c. 1946-1981) on p. 999; S. Buzar, P.E. Ogden and R. Hall, 'Households matter: the quiet demography of urban transformation', *Progress in Human Geography*, 29, 4 (2005), 417-8. On the closely related international decline of mean household size in selected European and North American countries, c. 1850-2000, see *ibid.*, 419, which is a key element of the 'second demographic transition', with its declining population growth rates and rapid increase in the number of households.

³² There is a large literature, but see J. Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective', in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds), *Population in History. Essays in Historical Demography* (London, 1965); Laslett and Wall, *Household and Family*, *op.cit.*; Laslett,

Family Life and Illicit Love, op.cit., ch. 1; A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1978); J. Hajnal, 'Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system', *Population and Development Review*, 8: 3 (1982), 449-494; through to S. Carmichael and J.L. van Zanden, 'How 'unique' was the European Marriage Pattern? Towards an ethnographic understanding of the EMP', paper to the 50th Anniversary Conference of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, 'Population Histories in Context: Past Achievements and Future Directions' (Cambridge, 16-18 September 2014).

³³ Indeed, even in these countries one may think of exceptions, for example affecting some Celtic regions where stem-type families were not uncommon and where knowledge of kinship remains strong. In Russia more complex extended family forms were common, evident also in Russian literature: for example, D. Gregorovitsh, *The Fishermen* (London, n.d., c. 1917), 31, 43, 51-2.

³⁴ 'Mapping the 2010 U.S. Census',
<http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/map?lat=40.75&lng=-73.95&l=11&view=SoloHousingView2010&ref=sunday> (28 February 2014). Manhattan, Census Tract 119, for which there were 966 single-person households out of 1028 households.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Los Angeles, Census Tract 2063: showing 2205 single-person households out of 2334 households.

³⁶ Klinenberg, 'One's a crowd', *op.cit.*

³⁷ S.R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life. Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2004), 122-3, 127-8, 205, 265-6, 275. A large majority of British paupers in any period were out-relief (non-workhouse) cases. K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging. Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 5.

³⁸ R. Sieder and M. Mitterauer, 'The reconstruction of the family life course: theoretical problems and empirical results', in Wall *et al*, *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, *op.cit.*, 340. The elderly were mostly in large households.

³⁹ See for example Wall, 'Leaving home', *op.cit.*, 372, 378-9.

⁴⁰ For re-evaluation of supposed under-reporting of female occupations in nineteenth-century censuses, see M. Anderson, 'What can the mid-Victorian censuses tell us about variations in married women's employment?', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999).

⁴¹ I am grateful to Carole Austen of the ONS for supplying this map. For further details, see <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/interactive/census-map-2-2---living-alone/index.html> (7 May 2013). For similar 1991 cartography of living alone: Hall, Ogden and Hill, 'The pattern and structure', *op.cit.*, 166-7.

⁴² National Records of Scotland. 'Statistical Bulletin, 2011 Census'. <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release1b/rel1bsb.pdf> (7 May 2013), p. 20; 'Census 2011: More Scots living at home alone', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-21876668> (21 March 2013).

⁴³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/interactive/census-map-2-1---health/index.html> (7 May 2013).

⁴⁴ Equivalent listings for Cumberland have rarely survived. C.R. Chapman, *Pre-1841 Censuses & Population Listings in the British Isles* (1990, Dursley, 1998), 52.

⁴⁵ <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7481-1>. The geographical information system was constructed by C.F. Roughley and A.E.M. Satchell of the University of Cambridge. Further details are provided in E. Higgs, C. Jones, K. Schürer and A. Wilkinson, *The Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) Guide* (2013), 280, http://www.essex.ac.uk/history/research/icem/documents/icem_guide.pdf.

⁴⁶ P. Bourdelais, ‘Le poids démographique des femmes seules en France (deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle)’, *Annales de démographie historique* (1981), 219-22, 224-7, where (for reasons relating to out-migration and age structures) the Paris region in 1851 and 1896 contained much fewer (%s) solitaires than eastern France (notably Bretagne and the western Pyrénées) and south-central France (for example, Aveyron, Cantal, Hérault, Lozère), which were the most conspicuous French regions of solitaires.

⁴⁷ A quantitative analysis of the post-war rise in living alone in the US stressed income growth, the relative ‘price’ of living alone, and attendant choice. R.T. Michael, V.R. Fuchs and S.R. Scott, ‘Changes in the propensity to live alone, 1950-1976’, *Demography*, 17, 1 (1980), 39, 42, 44, 49. See also J.C. Beresford and A.M. Rivlin, ‘Privacy, poverty, and old age’, *Demography*, 3, 1 (1966), 247; and (more sceptically), Wall, ‘Leaving home’, 383.

⁴⁸ Many insights in A. Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence. Self-Control and Well-Being in the United States and Britain since 1950* (Oxford, 2006), bear upon the historical issue of loneliness, notably his discussion of attachment theory (ch. 14), the effects of familial change (chs 13-14), and individualism, status pursuit, materialistic outlooks and mental disorder.

⁴⁹ For young women in New England, c. 1900, these constraints are stressed by T.K. Hareven and L.A. Tilly, 'Solitary women and family mediation in America and French textile cities', *Annales de démographie historique* (1981), 262-3, 267, 269: 'Opposition to single residence of young women was deeply ingrained in American culture, as well as in the rural communities from whence most of the women workers had come to Manchester [New Hampshire] – in Quebec, Ireland, and Scotland'.

⁵⁰ R. Hall and P.E. Ogden, 'The rise of living alone in Inner London: trends among the population of working age', *Environment and Planning, A*, 35 (2003), 875-8, 880-3, 886; Hall, Ogden and Hill, 'The pattern and structure', *op.cit.*, 171-2, 174, 177-8 (patterns shared with Paris and French cities); Hall, Ogden and Hill, 'Living alone', *op.cit.*, 280-2, 287; see *ibid.*, 268-70 on causes of the rise of living alone analysed by composition, propensity and ability.

⁵¹ See the fascinating discussion in Offer, *Challenge of Affluence*, ch. 13.

⁵² C. Villeneuve-Gokalp, 'Vivre en couple, chacun chez soi', *Population*, 52, 5 (1997), 1059-1081; I. Levin, 'Living apart together: a new family form', *Current Sociology*, 52, 2 (2004); C.Q. Strohm, J.A. Seltzer, S.D. Cochran and V.M. Mays, "'Living apart together" relationships in the United States', *Demographic Research*, 21 (2009); S. Duncan, M.

Phillips, S. Roseneil, J. Carter and M. Stoilova, 'Living apart together: uncoupling intimacy and co-residence', http://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/living-apart-together/LivingApartTogether_MultiMethodAnalysis_BriefingPaper_22April2013.pdf (27 June 2016); 'Living apart together', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_apart_together (28 June 2016).

⁵³ M. Anderson, 'The social position of spinsters in mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of Family History*, 9, 4 (1984), 377-393; M. Anderson, 'The emergence of the modern life cycle in Britain', *Social History*, 10, 1 (1985), 81-2; M. Anderson, 'Highly restricted fertility: very small families in the British fertility decline', *Population Studies*, 52, 2 (1998), 195-6; V. Nicholson, *Singled Out. How Two Million Women Survived without Men after the First World War* (2007, London, 2008); K. Holden, 'Imaginary widows: spinsters, marriage, and the "lost generation" in Britain after the Great War', *Journal of Family History*, 30, 4 (2005); K. Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage. Singleness in England, 1914-1960* (Manchester, 2010).

⁵⁴ R.M. Smith, 'The structured dependence of the elderly as a recent development: some sceptical historical thoughts', *Ageing and Society*, 4, 4 (1984), esp. 414, on the proportion of the elderly in the English population, 1541-1981, setting the twentieth-century rise into historical context; S. Ruggles, 'The demography of the unrelated individual, 1900-1950', *Demography*, 25, 4 (1988), on American trends.

⁵⁵ Lesthaeghe, *op.cit.*; Buzar, Ogden and Hall, *op.cit.*

⁵⁶ M. Castells, *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture. Vol. 2. The Power of Identity* (1997), 201, 204.

⁵⁷ Offer, *op.cit.*, 251.

⁵⁸ ONS, 'Marriages in England and Wales (Provisional), 2010', Table 1: 'Age at marriage by sex and previous marital status. Final 2009 data and historic data', <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-249125> (28 February 2014). Since 1986, median age at first marriage has persistently been over 25 for men and over 23 for women. *ibid.*, table 5.

⁵⁹ Castells, *op.cit.*, 197-201.

⁶⁰ M. Anderson, 'Fertility decline in Scotland, England and Wales: comparisons from the 1911 census of fertility', *Population Studies*, 52, 1 (1998), 15.

⁶¹ D.T. Rowland, 'Historical trends in childlessness', *Journal of Family Issues*, 28, 10 (2007), 1311-37.

⁶² Z. Baumann, *Liquid Love. On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge, 2003), 41-5.

⁶³ P.M. Keith, 'Isolation of the unmarried in later life', *Family Relations*, 35, 3 (1986), 389, 395.

⁶⁴ Klinenberg, 'I want to be alone' *op.cit.*; Klinenberg, 'One's a crowd', *op.cit.* On rising US figures for those living alone, 1960-1990, see also Castells, *op.cit.*, 282.

⁶⁵ Anderson, 'The emergence of the modern life cycle', *op.cit.*, 83-4; Beresford and Rivlin, *op.cit.*, 249.

⁶⁶ Students comprise only about 0.6% of those living alone in England and Wales, and the expansion of higher education is only a very minor aspect of the rise of living alone. Hall, Ogden and Hill, 'The pattern and structure', *op.cit.*, 180.

⁶⁷ P. Laslett, 'Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century', in Laslett and Wall, *Household and Family*, *op.cit.*, 143.

⁶⁸ 'Nuclear hardship' is discussed in P. Laslett, 'Family, kinship and collectivity as systems of support in preindustrial Europe: a consideration of the "nuclear hardship hypothesis"', *Continuity and Change*, 3, 2 (1988), 153-75; and R. Smith, 'Charity, self-interest and welfare: reflections from demographic and family history', in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, Self-interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996). See also M. Daunton, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, 2-3, 13; J.E. Smith, 'Widowhood and ageing in traditional English society', *Ageing and Society*, 4, 4 (1984), 443, 447.

⁶⁹ The work of Philip Batman on Swaledale and York explores this method, investigating changing local kin densities and 'core' families. See also P. Laslett, 'The significance of the past in the study of ageing: introduction to the special issue on history and ageing', *Ageing and Society*, 4, 4 (1984), 385-8 on demographic kinship simulation; Z. Zhao, 'The demographic transition in Victorian England and changes in English kinship networks', *Continuity and Change*, 11, 2 (1996); D. Postles (ed.), *Naming, Society and Regional Identity* (Leicester, 2002).

⁷⁰ Data from the UK Office of National Statistics: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk> (21 Nov. 2016); L. Gonzalez and T.K. Viitanen, 'The effect of divorce laws on divorce rates in Europe', Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) Discussion Paper No. 2023 (Bonn, Germany, March 2006), 24-5; V. Nicholson, *Millions Like Us. Women's Lives in the Second World War* (London, 2011), 105, 228, 368-70.

⁷¹ R.T. Michael, 'The rise in divorce rates, 1960-1974: age-specific components', *Demography*, 15, 2 (1978), 177-82; Gonzalez and Viitanen, *op.cit.*, 25.

⁷² Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, *op.cit.*, 202. The places studied were Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684), Stoke-on-Trent (1701), Corfe Castle (1790), and Ardleigh (1796).

⁷³ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, *op.cit.*, 212.

⁷⁴ Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, *op.cit.*, 137. On remarriage, see E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen and R.S. Schofield, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580-1837* (Cambridge, 1997), 171-82; E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871. A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), 189, 258-9; S. King and M. Shephard, 'Courtship and the remarrying man in late-Victorian England', *Journal of Family History*, 37, 3 (2012).

⁷⁵ Wall, 'Woman alone in English society', *op.cit.*, 307, 312-3, 315; Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, *op.cit.*, 198-9; M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971), 50; A. McCants, 'Not-so-merry-widows of Amsterdam, 1740-1782',

Journal of Family History, 24, 4 (1999), 443, 448-9, 461; R.A. Houston, *Peasant Petitions. Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2014), 241-2; A. Minister, *Family Strategies and Relationships. The Labouring Poor of Derby and South Derbyshire, 1750-1834* (unpub. PhD, 2013, University of Western Australia), 202-6. This was also very evident in France: Bourdelais, 'Le poids démographique des femmes seules en France', 218; as in Roubaix in 1906: Hareven and Tilly, *op.cit.*, 262; A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'The importance of women in an urban environment: the example of the Rheims household at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution', in Wall *et al*, *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, *op.cit.*, 484. In Europe (excluding major female out-migrating regions of Ireland) during the second half of the twentieth century women solitaires heavily outnumbered their male equivalents, with the sex ratio (males per 100 females) of solitaires commonly between 40 and 60. Wall, 'Leaving home', *op.cit.*, 380.

⁷⁶ ONS, 'What does the 2011 Census tell us about older people?' www.ons.gov.uk (28 June 2016), pp. 1, 7-8. The figures rise with age: in 2010, 49 percent of all people aged 75 and over lived alone. AgeUK, *Later Life in the United Kingdom*, 23.

[http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Factsheets/Later_Life_UK_factsheet.pdf?dtrk=true)

[GB/Factsheets/Later_Life_UK_factsheet.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Factsheets/Later_Life_UK_factsheet.pdf?dtrk=true) (28 June 2016).

⁷⁷ I have reworked data to combine genders, from R. Wall, 'Residential isolation of the elderly: a comparison over time', *Ageing and Society*, 4, 4 (1984), 487-9, tables 2 and 3. His data was from Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, *op.cit.*, 204-5; E. Shanas, *et al*, *Old People in Three Industrial Societies* (London, 1968), 186; M. Abrams, 'Researching the elderly', *Journal of Market Research Society*, 25, 3 (1983); see also the discussion and data in Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, *op.cit.*, 111-12; Tunstall, *op.cit.*

⁷⁸ Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, *op.cit.*, 111-5; R. Wall, 'The living arrangements of the elderly in contemporary Europe in the 1980s', in B. Bytheway, T. Keil, P. Allatt and A. Bryman (eds), *Becoming and Being Old. Sociological Approaches to Later Life* (1989, London, 1990); C. Phillipson, M. Bernard, J. Phillips and J. Ogg, *The Family and Community Life of Older People. Social Networks and Social Support in Three Urban Areas* (London, 2001), 56.

⁷⁹ Jamieson and Simpson, *op.cit.*, 34-5. *Kodokushi*, an increasingly used term in Japan, means 'lonely death'.

⁸⁰ B.L. Mijuskovic, *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* (Bloomington, IN, 2012).

⁸¹ L.A. Wood, 'Loneliness', in R. Harré (ed.), *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford, 1986).

⁸² For literary analysis see Mijuskovic, *op.cit.*, and R.A. Ferguson, *Alone in America. The Stories that Matter* (Cambridge, MA, 2012). For studies of other relevant emotions, see J. Bourke, *Fear: a Cultural History* (London, 2005); P. Toohey, *Boredom. A Lively History* (New Haven, 2011); J. Bourke, *The Story of Pain. From Prayer to Painkillers* (Oxford, 2014); C. Armon-Jones, 'The thesis of constructionism', in R. Harré (ed.), *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford, 1986); J. Moscoso, *Pain. A Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 2012); P.N. Stearns, *Jealousy. The Evolution of an Emotion in American History* (New York, 1989); J.H. Turner and J.E. Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*

(Cambridge, 2005); A. Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages and Cultures. Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁸³ T.L. Dumm, *Loneliness as a Way of Life* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).