

# How addressing social inequalities will reduce loneliness

**Loneliness in the European Union: Policies at work**  
**Brussels, 6th June 2023**

*Manuela Barreto*  
*University of Exeter, UK*





# Loneliness disparities:

- Ethnicity and race
- Migration status
- Poverty
- Disability status
- Gender and sexual identity
- Employment status
- Socio-economic status
- Mental health status
- Physical health status

Barreto, Doyle, & Qualter (2023).  
*Loneliness inequalities: Evidence Review.*  
Wales Centre for Public Policy.



# Loneliness disparities

- Migration status

**I was feeling alienated. My loneliness was a painful and disturbing realisation of being unaccepted and unloved, of being alone and having no other choice...** (Jo, participant in a study with migrants living in London; Christodoulou, 2015)

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# Loneliness disparities

- Mental health status

**When I suffered from anorexia, it fed into so many areas of my life. It was all consuming. One of those areas was loneliness. (...)  
Going out with friends always involved meals out or drinks and I was too scared.**  
(Michelle, participant in a study on loneliness and anorexia; Mumford, 2016)

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# Loneliness disparities

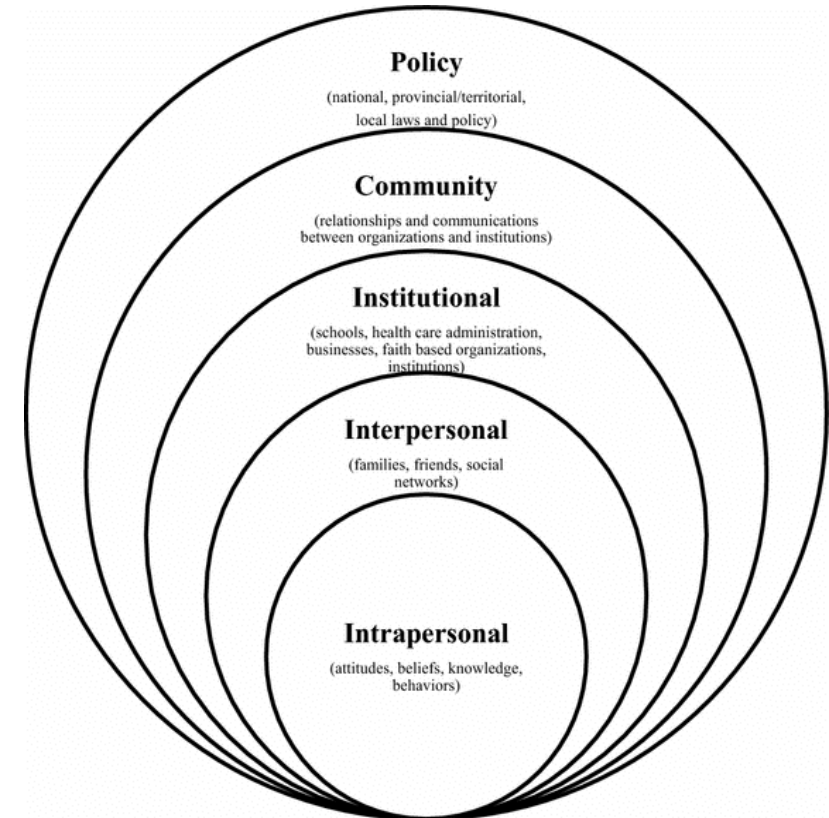
- Disability

**I was gradually becoming more and more aware of my loneliness and began to long for a friend. All my classmates had at least one and most had several. I would spend hours at night awake in bed looking up at the ceiling and imagining what it might be like to be friends with somebody.** (autistic participant in Tammet, 2006)

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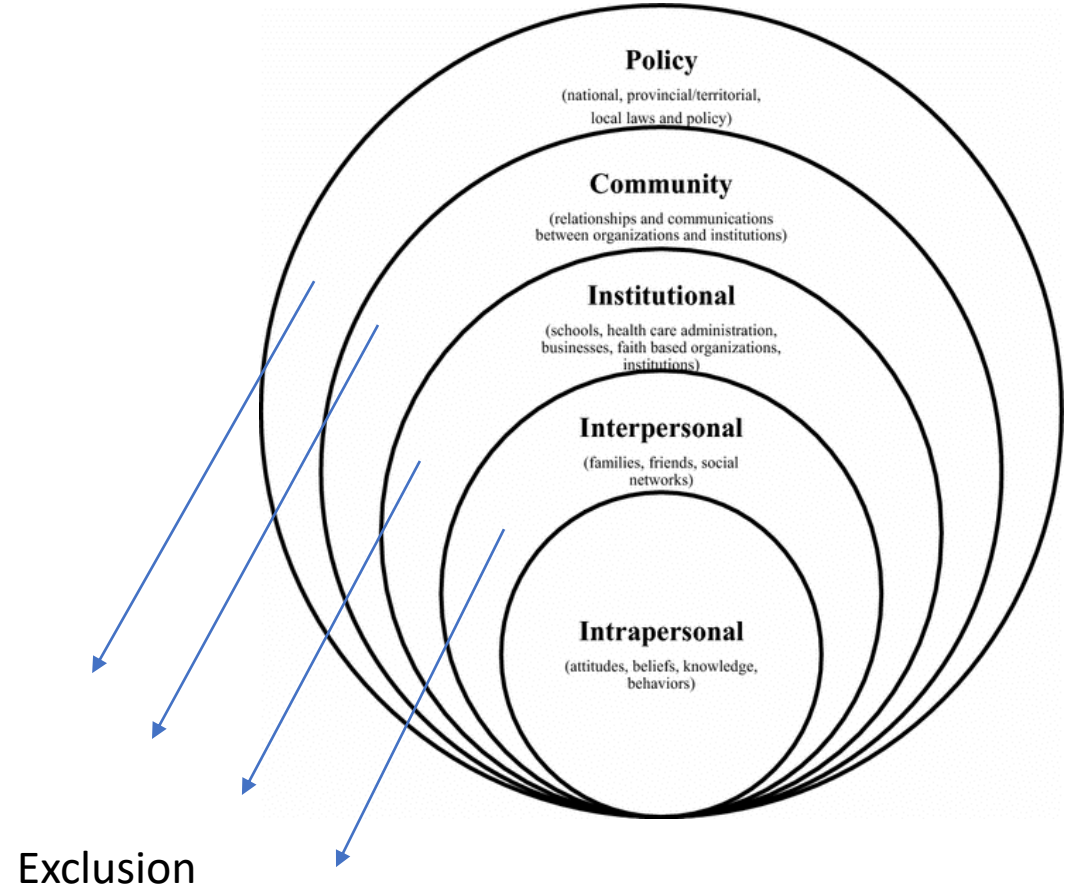
Beyond individual deficits:

## The socio-ecology of loneliness



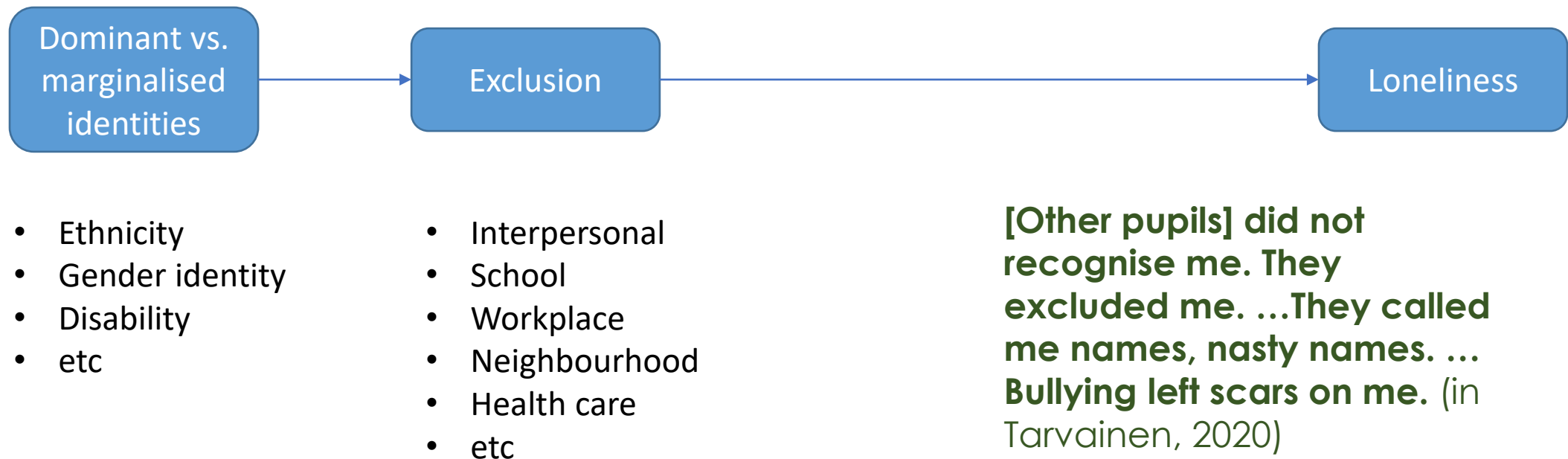
Beyond individual deficits:

## The socio-ecology of loneliness





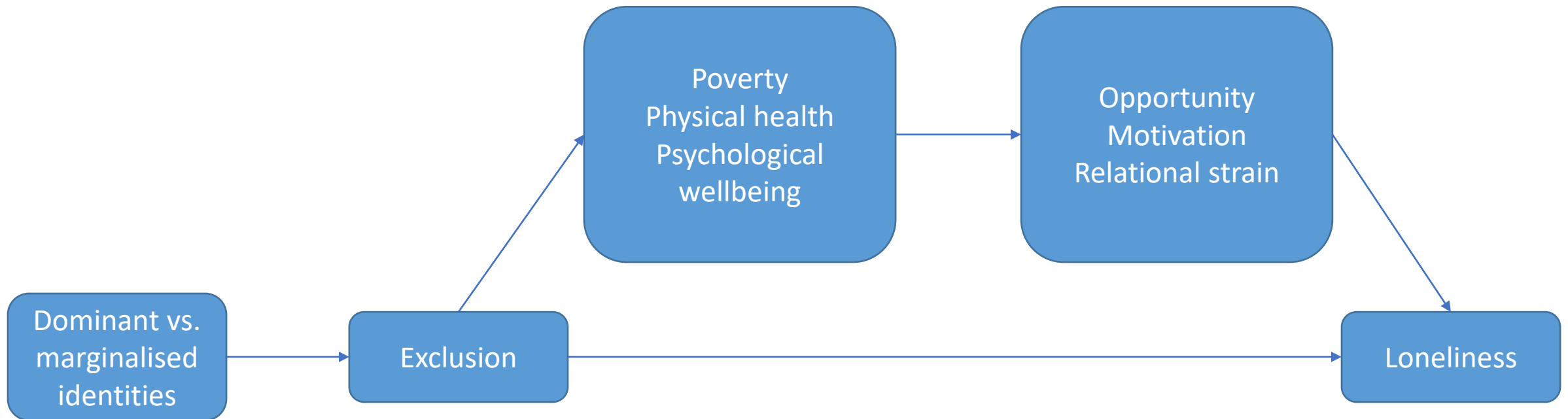
# Exclusion and loneliness













# Exclusion and loneliness



# Structural exclusion



|                              |                                                                                       |                                                            |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Community Attitudes</b>   |    | Prejudice<br>Loneliness Stigma                             |
| <b>Public Policy</b>         |    | Discriminatory Policy<br>Diversity Policy<br>Neoliberalism |
| <b>Demographic Diversity</b> |    | Absolute Diversity<br>Group Representation                 |
| <b>Physical Environment</b>  |    | Transportation Infrastructure<br>Housing<br>Green Space    |
| <b>Social Environment</b>    |   | Social Cohesion<br>Community Belonging                     |
| <b>Area Deprivation</b>      |  | Crime Rates<br>Socioeconomic Status                        |



# Happy to chat?





# Implications

- Loneliness cannot be addressed solely by focusing on individual deficits
- It is a social justice issue: Addressing it requires addressing social inequalities in experiences and living conditions
- Need better and longer term evidence to understand specific needs of specific marginalized populations, leading to interventions

# Thank you



Also to David Doyle and Pamela Qualter

M.Barreto@exeter.ac.uk



**Wales Centre  
for Public Policy**  
Canolfan Polisi  
Cyhoeddus Cymru

UNIVERSITY OF  
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