

## Report on short term postdoctoral research grant award 2021–22

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When I submitted my proposal for this short-term grant I had two papers under review. Part of the work that I undertook during these months involved addressing reviewers' comments and making suggested modifications. Both papers have now been accepted and one of them published. The paper that was published is Motta, V. & Bortolotti, L. (2021) Solitude as a Positive Experience: Empowerment and Agency, *Metodo. International Studies in Phenomenology*. The paper that was recently accepted for publication is Motta, V. & Larkin, M. (2022) Absence of Other and Disruption of Self: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Meaning of Loneliness. It is a contribution to a special issue called "Working with others' experiences: Theory, Practice and Application" for the journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

Part of the work that I wanted to do for this grant involved developing some ideas from the final chapter of my thesis. In my thesis I argued that the meaning of loneliness is constituted by an awareness of absence and that this absence is only partly related to other people; and that loneliness is not only about disconnection from others but also disruption of self and self-knowledge. During the period covered by this grant, I presented some of these ideas at the conference Loneliness: A Discussion in Philosophy and Psychology (<https://www.lonelinessphilpsych.org>) The conference was organized by the Philosophy Department and the Hoffman Center for Business Ethics at Bentley University. After the conference, I was invited to write a contribution to a special issue on Loneliness for the journal *Topoi*. The title of my paper is 'Loneliness: From Absence of Other to Disruption of Self'. The paper is in preparation to submitted for peer review.

Another part of the work that I wanted to do for this grant involved the application of some of the philosophical ideas in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a result of some of several enriching discussions that I've had with colleagues who are researchers as well as practitioners involved in different areas of the health care, I co-authored a paper with Rachel Wood and Dr. Jordan Sibeoni entitled 'Nurse Burnout and COVID-19: Can addressing Loneliness Improve the Emotional Health of our Workforce? Under review *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. The paper argues that there is a connection between the experience of loneliness and burnout.

During my PhD I undertook two different studies with two different populations in different contexts. I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research method, to gather and discuss first-person reports on loneliness. The first study was looking at loneliness and solitude experienced by women in the context of spiritual life, and the second study was looking at loneliness and disconnection in the context of the use of technology. The results of the first study will appear in the accepted paper that I made reference to above. The last project that I wanted to undertake during the period covered by this grant involved analyzing the results of the second study. I have now transcribed the interviews and conducted the analysis of each participant. The results offer significant grounding for the philosophical theories developed in my thesis where I argued that being rooted in a world that is coherent, and the capacity to appear to others and to oneself, are connected. For that I was considering attunement to a range of elements in the environment, rather than just a feeling of connection to people. The results suggest that technology can be an environment which can distortive of our perception and this can in turn deeply modify the nature of our human connections. In the next few weeks, I expect be able to present the results to colleagues to ensure that the themes that are emerging from the analysis are properly audited and that they are well represented in the transcripts. After reflection and feedback, the results will be ready to be presented.

I am grateful for having been given this grant to continue with my work.