

<b>Institution:</b> Queen Mary University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Living With Feeling: Transforming Understandings of Emotional Health		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof. Thomas Dixon Dr Sarah Chaney	Professor of History Research Fellow	Sep 2007-Present Jan 2018-Present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Since 2015, researchers at Queen Mary have been exploring the difference between healthy and unhealthy human emotions through a Wellcome Trust funded project: 'Living With Feeling: Emotional Health in History, Philosophy, and Experience' (LWF). Their work has deepened and enhanced understandings of emotions, history, and health across a range of professional and public domains. Through frequent contributions to flagship BBC radio programming, a major exhibition at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), and a pioneering programme of lessons for primary schools called 'Developing Emotions', LWF researchers have equipped radio listeners, nurses, exhibition attendees, teachers, and schoolchildren with the historical understanding, ideas, and vocabulary needed to recognise and discuss emotions. This has helped a range of adults and children in the UK to articulate and move towards their own well-informed visions of emotional health.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Established in 2008, Queen Mary's Centre for the History of the Emotions is the first research centre in the UK to give an institutional home to funded projects exploring the history of emotions. Through its leading research and innovative engagement projects, the Centre has shown how the humanities can complement and extend medical and scientific theories of emotions, challenging the reductive idea that all human beings have the same, fixed 'basic emotions,' and enriching discussions of emotions and mental health.</p> <p>Prof. Thomas Dixon was the Centre's Director from 2008 to 2017 and has provided research leadership in wide-ranging studies of emotions and health. His research has examined the historical development of 'the emotions' as a psychological category, and the histories behind contemporary attitudes towards feelings and emotions, including love and altruism, weeping and the British 'stiff upper lip,' the education of the feelings, and varieties of rage and anger. In 2010-11, Dixon explored historical debates about the place of emotions in 19<sup>th</sup> century elementary education, that resulted in a publication which showed that it had long been recognised that feelings are as important as intellect when it comes to educating young children [3.2]. Since founding the Centre, Dixon has been the P.I. on two major Wellcome Trust grants. In 2015, building on the results of an Enhancement Award (2009-2014) [EQR.3.3,3.4], his colleagues and he won a GBP 1,700,000 Collaborative Award from the Wellcome Trust for the Living With Feeling (LWF) project (2015-2021) [EQR.3.5].</p> <p>The LWF project has allowed Dixon and Dr Sarah Chaney, one of the project's research fellows who specialises in the history of healthcare and emotions, to extend the centre's research into the history of our emotional language through two major research strands. The first concerns changes in emotional vocabularies. The historical contingency of our modern emotional terminology reminds us that there are other ways of understanding and experiencing our feelings. Dixon has found, for instance, that 'altruism' is not the same as 'love' or 'charity' [3.1, pp.420]. Even more fundamentally, 'passions' and 'affections' are not the same as our modern 'emotions,' which only became a psychological category in the 19<sup>th</sup> century [3.3]. Dixon's substantial article about the history and meaning of 'anger' explores the conceptual and cultural history of rage, revenge, and wrath, and shows how ancient philosophers, medieval moralists, and modern psychologists all deployed</p>		

different words and concepts, which, despite superficial similarities, conjure up different emotional worlds [3.5]. In a similar fashion, Chaney has explored the history of ‘compassion’ and its place within nursing and care. Today, discussions of emotions and healthcare assume that ‘compassion’ is a basic human capacity, unchanging across history and culture. Chaney’s research shows that ‘compassion’ is in fact a recent preoccupation; love and care in nursing have been constituted in different ways at different times by different groups of people [3.6].

A second important strand of the research draws attention to the way that emotions can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. Chaney’s research highlights how selflessness, sympathy, and moral purity were all expected traits of nurses during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that these qualities were gendered as feminine [3.6, 3.7]. Dixon’s 2015 book, *Weeping Britannia*, which was chosen as a book of the year in multiple publications including the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Review of Books*, demonstrated that the idea of the British ‘stiff upper lip’ was an invention of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which embodied a particular ideology related to British imperialism and masculinity. In earlier periods, British culture allowed for more varied and demonstrative forms of emotional expression, including the public tears of both men and women [3.4, pp.438].

The pluralistic and humanistic approach to emotions that unites this research goes beyond reductive ideas about hard-wired ‘basic emotions,’ and provides historically informed alternatives to medical discourses that pathologize some emotions. The LWF grant enabled Dixon and Chaney to apply this approach to particular emotions and emotional states – including tears, rage, love, and compassion – and demonstrate how these have shaped, and continued to influence, contemporary gender stereotypes, political and policy debates, medical practice, and schooling.

### 3. References to the research

[3.1] Dixon, T. (2008). *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain*. Oxford University Press.

[3.2] Dixon, T. (2012). Educating the emotions from Gradgrind to Goleman. *Research Papers in Education*, 27(4), 481-495. [doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2012.690240](https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2012.690240) Reprinted in Ecclestone, K. (Ed.). (2017). *Emotional Well-being in Educational Policy and Practice: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 99–114). Routledge.

[3.3] Dixon, T. (2012). ‘Emotion’: The history of a keyword in crisis. *Emotion Review*, 4(4), 338-344. [doi.org/10.1177%2F1754073912445814](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1754073912445814)

[3.4] Dixon, T. (2015). *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a nation in tears*. OUP Oxford.

[3.5] Dixon, T. (2020). What is the history of anger a history of?. *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 4(1), 1-34. [doi.org/10.1163/2208522X-02010074](https://doi.org/10.1163/2208522X-02010074)

[3.6] Chaney, S. (2020). Before compassion: sympathy, tact and the history of the ideal nurse. *Medical Humanities*. [doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2019-011842](https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2019-011842)

[3.7] Chaney, S. (2019). ‘Purifying the profession’: Good character and the general nursing council disciplinary committee in the inter-war period. *Women’s history*, 2(14), 9-13. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc6986912/>

### Evidence of the quality of the research

[EQR.3.3.3.4] Dixon, T. (2009-14). Medicine, Emotion and Disease in History [088723/Z/09/Z]. Wellcome Trust. Enhancement Award in the History of Medicine. GBP337,764.

[EQR.3.5] Dixon (2015-22). Living With Feeling: Emotional Health in History, Philosophy and Experience [108727/Z/15/Z & 108727/15/B]. Wellcome Trust. Collaborative Award. GBP1,700,000.

### 4. Details of the impact

From its inception, the Living With Feeling (LWF) project engaged key stakeholders with wider social and cultural issues linked to the history of emotions. Dixon has worked in the areas of broadcasting, mental health and education and Chaney has collaborated with the nursing profession. Their impact has enhanced understandings of the nature of emotions and health through

BBC media and podcasts, an exhibition with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), and an educational programme developed in partnership with primary schools in the South of England.

### **Enhancing public understanding of the history of emotions through broadcast media**

Dixon has established himself as a leading public expert on the history of emotions. Since August 2013, he has appeared on high-profile programmes on BBC Radio 3, 4 (circulation: 10,754,000) and 5 Live (Free Thinking, All in the Mind, Front Row, R5 Live Breakfast) to discuss attitudes to emotions in public life [5.1]. Responding to displays of emotion by politicians and public figures, Dixon has highlighted how the enduring legacy of 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes towards weeping has shaped contemporary reactions to crying. He has also written and presented substantial radio features, including 'Five Hundred Years of Friendship,' a 15-part series broadcast on Radio 4, which drew on his research into the history of altruism. This series aired in a slot which regularly attracts a weekly listenership of 2,500,000 [5.2]. Reflecting on its success, the Radio 4 series producer noted that Dixon's 'critical, research-informed perspective' and 'lucid, engaging style' was appreciated by the station's listeners, who found his emotional history of friendship accessible and insightful [5.2].

The success of Dixon's prior broadcast work, drawing on his research, led the BBC Radio 3 Head of Speech Programmes to invite Dixon to deliver the opening lecture of the 2019 Free Thinking Festival. According to the Head of Speech Programmes, Dixon was 'ideally positioned to frame the weekend's discussions,' because of his status as the 'leading historical expert in this field' and his extensive work with the BBC [5.2]. Drawing on his research into grief, gender, the stiff upper lip, and the history of anger, Dixon guided how audiences would approach the emotions for the rest of the weekend [5.2]. The lecture was well received by festival attendees, who described the encouragement it gave them to consider how 'significantly our emotions are culturally and socially determined' and broadened their view of emotions [5.1]. It was also featured as part of the Radio 3 Arts and Ideas podcast, which was downloaded 400,000 times in the month after the festival [5.2]. While at the festival, Dixon made a BBC Ideas video about his research into the history of anger, which has been viewed 178,500 times since May 2019 [5.1].

Through the award-winning podcast series, *The Sound of Anger*, released in September 2019, Dixon and his collaborators challenged the widespread view that anger is one of a small number of 'basic' emotions. The series was shaped by Dixon's research into the histories of rage, revenge, and wrath, which emphasises the differences between those historical states and modern 'anger.' In 2020, *The Sound of Anger* was nominated for three British Podcast Awards – the most nominations received by any podcast – and won Gold in two categories: 'Smartest' and 'Wellbeing' [5.1]. The series was praised by the panel of judges for its 'focused and in-depth exploration of a familiar and difficult feeling', and 'creative blend of sound, drama, and expert analysis' [5.1]. It has since featured in *Esquire*, *Prospect*, *The Guardian*, and *The Times*, and has been streamed 14,200 times on major streaming platforms [5.1].

### **Shaping the design of a public exhibition**

From 2018 to 2020, the LWF project partnered with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) to develop a major exhibition at their London headquarters and online: *Who Cares? A History of Emotions in Nursing*. LWF recognised that the RCN's representation of 450,000 nurses, midwives, and healthcare assistants gave the highest potential reach for the transfer of its research findings to those for whom they are most relevant and important. Chaney's particular interests in 20<sup>th</sup> century healthcare, especially the history of nursing, enabled her research to speak directly to the professionals with whom she collaborated.

Chaney and Dixon shaped the design, content and thematic structure of *Who Cares?* Early ideas for the exhibition arose from Chaney's research into the history of compassion in nursing. In her role as Events and Exhibitions Manager at the RCN, Chaney led the collaboration between LWF and the RCN, organising interpretation workshops to develop the exhibition's content and themes. According to the RCN's Associate Director of Nursing, the contributions made by LWF prompted the RCN to 'move beyond a specific focus on discrete emotional states to look at the range of ways

emotions have been understood, expressed or expected in different times and contexts' [5.4]. As a result, the RCN chose to focus on six key themes – birth and motherhood, death, romance, war, faith, and protest – rather than individual emotional states [5.4]. Elements of LWF research – especially Chaney's work on the General Nursing Council's Disciplinary Committee in the inter-war period and Dixon's examination of the 'stiff upper lip' of WW1 nurse Edith Cavell – featured prominently in the sections devoted to exploring these themes.

The exhibition opened in January 2020 and has been very successful. The novel thematic focus of Who Cares? proved popular with RCN members and public audiences. Nurses who attended its launch praised the exhibition's timely focus on the emotions associated with nursing, which they felt had been long overlooked, and its exploration of the profession's development over time [5.3]. Other guests described how the exhibition made them think differently about the importance of emotions to nursing, the history of the profession, and their own experiences of care [5.3, 5.4]. The success of the exhibition is also reflected in attendance figures. In total, 9,153 people visited Who Cares? between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (when the RCN was forced to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic) – a higher total figure than recorded in the same period in both 2018 and 2019 for 'The Voice of Nursing', the previous exhibition held at the RCN [5.4].

Who Cares? also led to the formation of new relationships between the RCN, nursing Chief Executives, and care home managers, and new reflections on working practices [5.4]. The Jewish Care Foundation reached out to the RCN to explore how a focus on the emotions associated with care could be translated into practical change [5.3]. Inspired by the exhibition's focus and themes, the Chief Executive of the Cavell Nurses Trust wrote of his intention to explore the importance of emotions for nurses accessing the support that the trust offers [5.3]. Finally, a Senior Information Officer at the National Medical Council reported that visiting the exhibition prompted him to 'ensure that our archive and records reflect the full experience of registrants, emotional as well as practical' [5.3, 5.4].

### **Enhancing the emotional vocabulary of primary school children**

In 2019-2020, the LWF team collaborated with The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT), a large multi-academy trust in the South of England, to create and trial the Developing Emotions programme. Developing Emotions is a series of lessons (18 each for Year 3 and Year 5 children) teaching children how to discuss and represent emotions using a range of historical sources and ideas. The lessons emphasise the importance of emotional words and vocabulary, and how those have changed over time. Individual lessons, such as those on 'Anger and Revenge,' 'Feeling Blue,' and 'Love and Friendship,' were directly based on Dixon's research, and used the same philosophical, visual, and literary sources.

The partnership between LWF and TKAT began in 2019, when one of TKAT's Educational Directors asked Dixon to discuss his research at an event for headteachers [5.6]. A subsequent workshop in 2019 brought together TKAT teachers, headteachers, and senior leaders to identify how LWF could develop resources to enhance the emotional wellbeing of schoolchildren [5.6]. After designing the first set of lessons, LWF organised a half-day workshop in November 2019, which over 150 TKAT teachers from eleven schools attended [5.6]. Participating teachers reviewed early lesson plan designs and offered ideas for lesson content. At the end of the workshop, eight headteachers signed up to have their schools participate in the pilot programme.

In February-March 2020, 490 students in eight TKAT schools (370 Y5 students, 120 Y3 students) trialled the first iteration of the Developing Emotions programme. Schools completed four of the six units before the Covid-19 school closure in March 2020. Following this, the LWF team convened a working group of teachers to identify how the lessons could be improved and produced an expanded eight-week version of the programme aimed at Y5 and Y6 students [5.6]. Over 320 students in five TKAT schools completed the second Developing Emotions programme in October-November 2020.

Participation in the Developing Emotions programme significantly enhanced students' emotional vocabularies. At the end of the programme, the number of emotion synonyms correctly identified by

students increased by 75% [5.5]. For both anger and happiness, the number of synonyms identified by students at the end of the programme doubled, with students able to recall advanced vocabulary such as wrath, apoplectic, and schadenfreude [5.5, 5.6]. Teachers reported that this enrichment of students' emotional vocabularies had a direct effect on their work, behaviour and participation in class discussions. Written work improved during and after the programme, as students used the rich vocabulary they had learned in the lessons [5.5]. A Y5 teacher, for example, described how, in their writing, students 'were able to talk about their characters' emotions in more detail using different vocabulary' [5.5]. Other teachers noted that key emotion words, such as 'melancholy' and 'apoplectic,' were regularly mentioned by students in subsequent class discussions [5.5].

Improvements in the emotional vocabularies of students also helped TKAT staff to address behavioural issues. For example, a Y6 teacher described how students at their school were able to 'express easier how they're feeling using the words they've learned in lessons' [5.5]. As a result, staff could address emotional and behavioural problems experienced by certain students more quickly, reducing the time these students were out of lessons. The lessons also helped students to discuss their feelings more openly and recognise that their classmates may express their emotions in different ways [5.5].

Teachers involved in the programme reported that it affected their understanding of the emotions, their importance, and strategies for discussing them with students. One teacher, for example, noted, 'it has made me realise the importance of providing the children with a range of vocabulary for describing their emotions, whilst also then giving them a situation in which to apply this' [5.5].

Teachers also indicated that they would incorporate aspects of the programme into their own teaching. A Y5 teacher, for example, stated that they would 'definitely design some lessons using the 'Blues' lesson as a model' [5.5]. For the Educational Director of TKAT, the success of the Developing Emotions programme, 'clearly demonstrated the importance of placing the emotions at the heart of learning' [5.6]. In 2021, the LWF team will work with senior members of the TKAT trust to explore how the programme can be offered to other year groups and to other schools within the trust.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] [Media] BBC Radio; BBC Ideas; Soundcloud and other podcast data.

[5.2] [Testimonial] BBC Radio: Head of Radio 3 Speech Programmes, Matthew Dodd; Senior Radio 4 Producer, Beaty Rubens. [Corroborator 1 & 2]

[5.3] [Feedback] Who Cares?

[5.4] [Testimonial] Associate Director of Nursing. RCN [Corroborator 3]

[5.5] [Report] Developing Emotions Evaluation. [Corroborator 4]

[5.6] [Testimonial] Regional Director. TKAT [Corroborator 5]