

# Anticipating the possibility of developing dementia: Perspectives of older transgender/intersex persons

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# International MetLife Survey on Preparation for Aging in Trans-Identified Populations

- Over 1200 participants for an online survey
- 54 items to check; 10 short completion items; 10 items asking for narrative responses
- Invitation to participate translated into Dutch, French, German, Spanish
- N = 141 persons age 61+





Transsexuals, cross-dressers, intersex, and other persons whose gender expression or identification is other than traditional represent an invisible minority within the worldwide elderly population (Persson, 2009)

# Self-description of sexual orientation

Heterosexual, 28%

Lesbian, 21%

Bisexual, 18%

Asexual, 7%

Gay, 6%

Questioning, 5%

Celibate, 4%

# Gender self-perception

Feminine, 38%

Transgender, 22%

Transwoman, 16%

Masculine, 7%

Gender identity is unrelated to sexual orientation

Term used to describe self to others (public presentation)

Transgender, 34%

Transsexual, 23%

Heterosexual, 17%

Other, 11%



# Concern about developing dementia, chronic illness, and public presentation

2 x 2 factorial ANOVA: concern for developing dementia is associated with an interaction between having a chronic illness and public presentation of gender variance/sexual orientation

$$F(2, 85) = 4.54, p = .013$$

Identifying as transsexual, and having a chronic illness is associated with greater concern about developing dementia,  $t(27) = 3.14, p = .004$

# The problem of multiple stigmatizing identities

# What they said...

- Fears and concerns about aging
- Concerns about needing care
- Concerns about providing care
- Being GLBTIQ-identified and preparing for old age
- Skills developed to age positively
- Good things to anticipate about aging
- Wisdom to pass on to GLBTIQ-identified persons

Lack of respect

Being alone

Loss of dignity

Discrimination

Not being able to find  
an acceptable,  
accepting "senior  
facility

Being "outed"

Marginalization

**DEMENTIA**

# Statements about fears/concerns about aging that relate to dementia

- “Having dementia because my aunt had it and I had a hard time caring for her. Also, in what ward would they put me—male or female—because I don’t have SRS?”
- “Developing dementia and referring to myself with the wrong terms”
- “Perhaps I’ll just forget that I need to fulfill my ‘female attributes’. Then, I’m not sure that I’ll remember to be ‘gendered’ at all.”

# Dementia and dependency

- “I have realistic concerns that I will not be treated as I would like when I am dependent on others.”
- “It might be hard to find a place to go if I need care; I worry that people won’t be respectful or will tell others about my status.”
- “I worry that people will attempt to force me into being the wrong gender.”

# Resilience

“a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000)

Resilience is “central to aging because adversity is inevitable at points throughout the lifespan and certainly as we age” (Resnick, 2011)

# Resilience repertoires of persons with “gender variant” identities

- Exercise of agency
- Self acceptance
- Caring relationships
- Openness to spirituality
- Enjoyment of life



“Developing resilience in the face of discrimination has helped some gay and lesbian seniors become experts in dealing with adversity, facing change, and learning how to take care of themselves....Gender-role flexibility may also add to more successful aging, as some individuals may have developed skills not developed by their heterosexual peers” (Sperber, 2006).

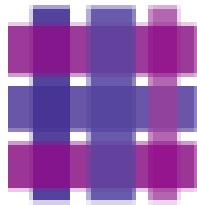


# GrayPrideParade

Another Love Story

a blog about LGBT aging

National  
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*Caring and Aging with Pride*



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