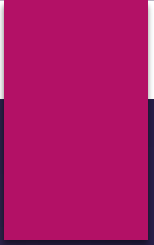




Talk 10. Queer(ing) Ageing: Enabling Sexual and Gender Diversity in Later Life

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Queer(ing) Aging: Enabling Sexual and Gender Diversity in Later Life

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Why queer aging?

"I CAME TO SEE OLD AGE AND GERONTOLOGY AS A ROBUST BASTION OF HETEROSEXUALITY, MEDICINE, AND OUR MARKET ECONOMY...THE ETHICS OF AGING [SIMILARLY] SHAMES QUEERS (E.G. SEXUAL DEVIANTS) AND FAT, LAZY, ALCOHOLIC, AND LONELY OLDER PEOPLE."

--JESUS RAMIRIEZ-VALLES,
QUEER AGING (2016)

An aging LGBT cohort

- ▶ The first generation to embrace a gay identity
- ▶ The generation of Stonewall and ACT-UP
- ▶ The accumulation of both insecurity and resilience
- ▶ Ambivalence about assimilation versus transformation

“THE AGING OF THIS GENERATION MIGHT BE AS WORLD-SHATTERING AS THE GAY LIBERATION AND AIDS MOVEMENTS WERE”

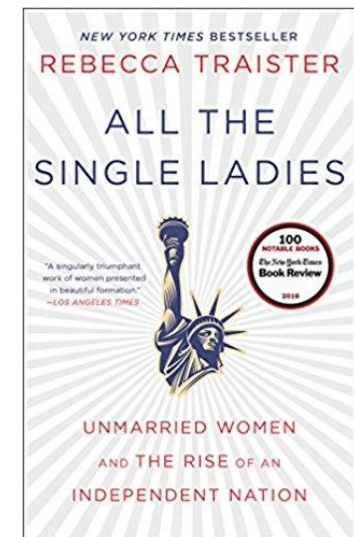
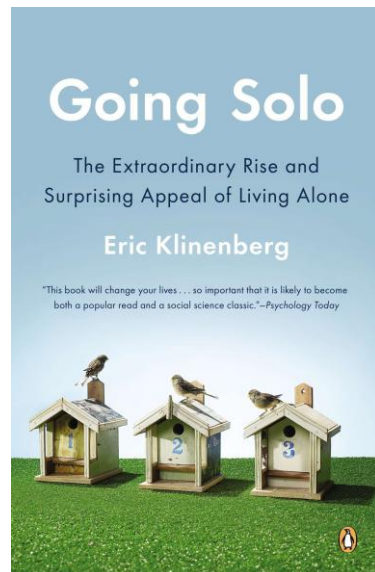
--Ramirez-Valles, *Queer Aging* (2016)

“I SUSPECT THAT MUCH OF THE CHANGE WILL OCCUR OVER THE NEXT DECADE AS A DIRECT RESULT OF AN EVER-GROWING PHALANX OF GAY AND GRAY ACTIVISTS WHO, AS IN EVERY OTHER STAGE OF OUR LIVES, HAVE RESHAPED SOCIETY.”

-- James T. Sears (ed), *Growing Older* (2010)

Broader demographic trends

- ▶ Living alone has been called the most significant demographic shift since the baby boom
- ▶ The growing proportion of women who are unmarried also presents massive social change



The queer turn

- ▶ Recognition of heteronormativity's effects on/limitations for *everyone*
- ▶ Respect for heterogeneity of LGBT people
 - ▶ In terms of identification with heterosexual norms (e.g. marriage)
 - ▶ In terms of intersecting racial and other identities
- ▶ Move from *identity* and *inclusion* to *intersectionality* and *transformation*

"I KNOW I HAVE AN ANDROGYNOUS LOOK....WHEN I CAME OUT IN COLLEGE IN THE LATE SIXTIES AT THE HEIGHT OF THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT, I WAS DISTINCTLY TOLD BY A COUPLE OF BLACK ORGANIZATIONS AT THE TIME, 'WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND HERE'....I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT THEY MEANT."

-- Quoted in Woody, "Aging out" (2017)

Sexual and gender diversity

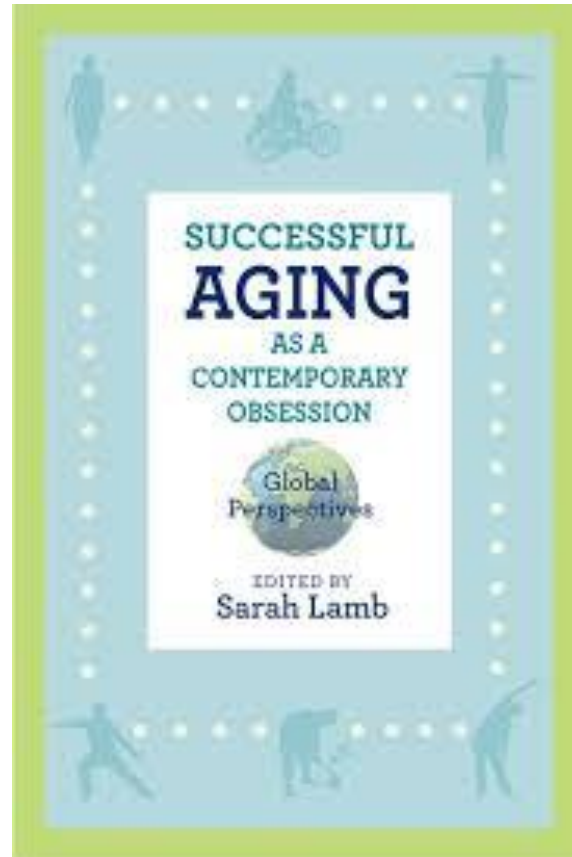
- ▶ Recognizing older LGBT ambivalence about “queer”
- ▶ As an alternative to “normativity/ies”
- ▶ An inclusive paradigm that encompasses the *majority*



What is the question?

- ▶ How do heterosexual norms intersect with other normative systems to contribute to stress and insecurity in later life for people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities?
- ▶ What practices, relationships and ways of being are people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities creating to age with dignity and authenticity in a heteronormative world?
- ▶ What are the obligations of an aging society to create an environment in which people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities can age with dignity and authenticity?
- ▶ How can the experience of people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities influence the way society as a whole thinks about aging?

“Successful aging”: The dominant model



A growing queer contribution to critical gerontology

“THE GOAL [OF **QUEER GERONTOLOGY**] IS TO UNMASK THE WAYS IN WHICH HETEROSEXUAL DOMINANT NORMS DEFINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN OLDER PERSON—FROM THE DECLINE OF OUR BODIES TO RETIREMENT, SUPPORT COMMUNITIES, AND LIVING CONDITIONS.”

- RAMIREZ-VALLES, 2016

“THE PROJECT OF **QUEERING AGING FUTURES** THEN BECOMES ONE OF ACTIVELY IMAGINING RADICALLY DIFFERENT AGING FUTURES THAT MIGHT ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENCE AND CHALLENGE NORMATIVITY AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY.”

- SANDBERG & MARSHALL, 2017



QUESTION 1

HOW DOES
HETERONORMATIVITY
INTERSECT WITH OTHER
NORMATIVE SYSTEMS TO
CONTRIBUTE TO STRESS AND
INSECURITY IN LATER LIFE FOR
PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE SEXUAL
ORIENTATIONS AND GENDER
IDENTITIES?

(1) Bodies and binaries

- ▶ Idealization of “masculine” or “feminine” body type and expression
- ▶ Expectation that gender identity and expression correspond to biological sex (cis-normativity)
- ▶ Stigmatization of aging with HIV, or of becoming HIV-positive in later life

(2) Relationships and roles

- ▶ Social, cultural and economic pressures to form a monogamous couple and marry
- ▶ Lack of formal recognition of non-spousal intimate relationships
- ▶ Expectation of traditional roles performed by “husbands” and “wives,” including breadwinning and caregiving
- ▶ Expectation of provision of elder care by a female spouse

(3) Children and families

- ▶ Devolution of caregiving responsibilities to biological children
- ▶ Stigmatization of “illegitimate” children born “out of wedlock,” and of older persons without children
- ▶ Dominance of social networks organized around nuclear families (schools, churches, social clubs)

(4) Time and space

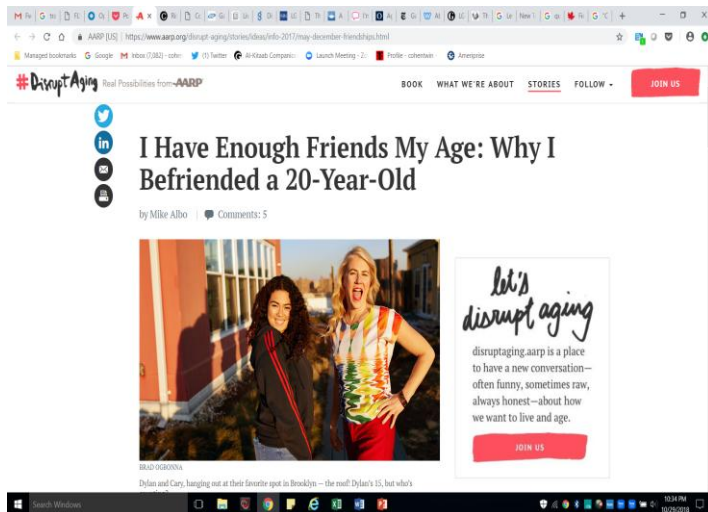
- ▶ Expectation to engage in age-appropriate activities along the life course
- ▶ Limited opportunities for intergenerational interaction and transmission outside nuclear families
- ▶ Traditional provision of care in private homes
- ▶ Assumption of particular gender and sexual identity in social and residential places for older adults
- ▶ Decline of gay neighborhoods with increasing gentrification



QUESTION 2

WHAT PRACTICES,
RELATIONSHIPS AND WAYS
OF BEING ARE PEOPLE WITH
DIVERSE SEXUAL
ORIENTATIONS AND GENDER
IDENTITIES CREATING TO AGE
AUTHENTICALLY IN A
HETERONORMATIVE WORLD?

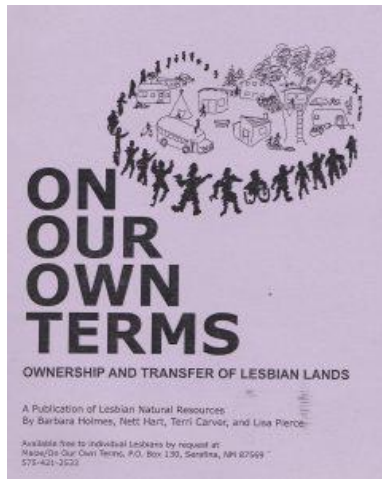
Friendship & kinship



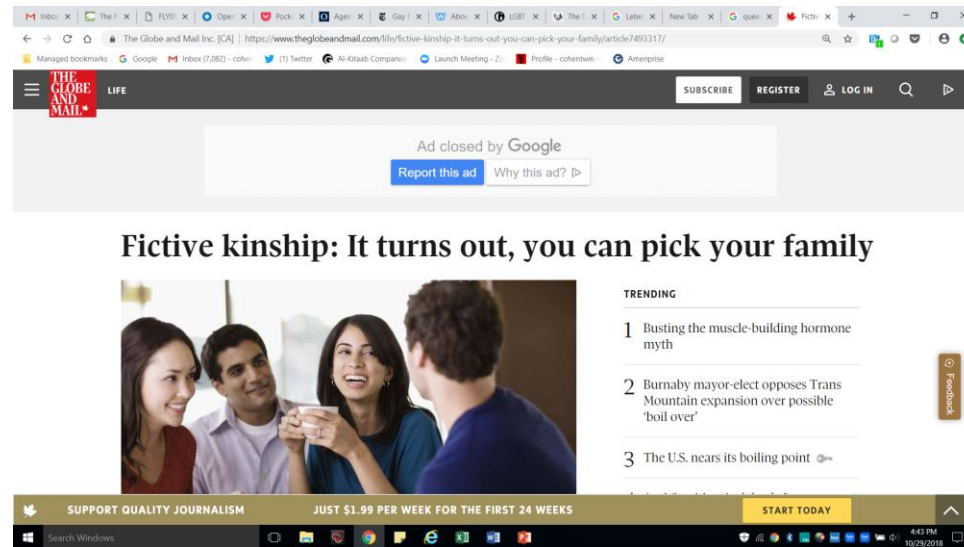
queer aging -
among friends



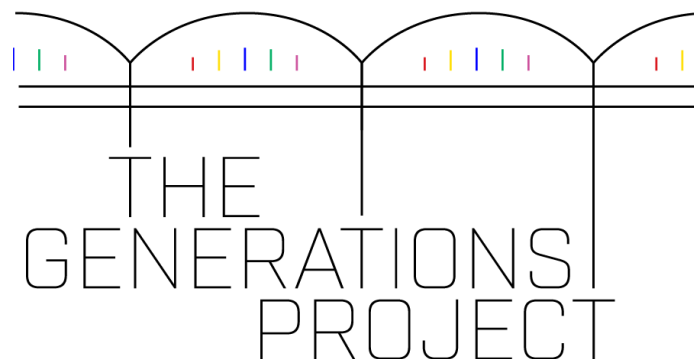
Housing & community



Children & dependents



Memory & mentorship



I'm From Driftwood

The LGBTQ Story Archive



QUESTION 3

WHAT ARE THE OBLIGATIONS
OF AN AGING SOCIETY TO
CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN
WHICH PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE
SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND
GENDER IDENTITIES CAN AGE
AUTHENTICALLY?

Policy steps to enable diverse aging

- ▶ Maintenance and expansion of a public safety net
- ▶ Recognition of chosen families and dependency relationships
- ▶ Increased support to unpaid caregivers
- ▶ Inclusive immigration policies to keep chosen families together
- ▶ Inclusion of diverse elders in development of aging law, policy and practice
- ▶ Attention to diversity and inclusion in mainstream aging services and institutions



QUESTION 4

HOW CAN THE EXPERIENCE
OF PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE
SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND
GENDER IDENTITIES
INFLUENCE THE WAY SOCIETY
AS A WHOLE THINKS ABOUT
AGING?

What if...

Instead of...

- ▶ “Letting oneself go”
- ▶ Becoming a “spinster”
- ▶ The “empty nest”
- ▶ “Robbing the cradle”
- ▶ “Acting your age”

...We thought about

- ▶ Diverse physical expression
- ▶ Non-marital intimacy
- ▶ Chosen family
- ▶ Intergenerational dependency
- ▶ Being yourself

Conclusion

“BY QUEERING AGING FUTURES
WE THUS AIM TO OPEN UP
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING
AND THEORIZING THAT MIGHT
PROVIDE SPACE FOR A GREATER
DIVERSITY OF LATER LIVES,
INCLUDING THOSE RENDERED
ABJECT IN CURRENT MODELS OF
‘SUCCESSFUL AGING.’”

--SANDBERG AND MARSHALL,
2017

Ageing Well series of Public Talks



"Being mindful of eating well, hydration, physical activity, learning new things and social connections can delay the decline caused by ageing."

Come and join us for the series of public talks with the title "Ageing Well"



Dr. Jitka Vseteckova

Senior Lecturer, Health and Social Care



Summary of related resources to The Ageing Well Public Talk Series

Podcasts

Vseteckova J & King J (2020) COVID-19 Interview podcast for The Retirement Café: ['Ageing Well Under Lockdown'](#)

Vseteckova J & Broad E (2020) Podcast – Open University & The Parks Trust [Keep Me Walking – researching with people living with dementia and their carers](#) –

Vseteckova J (2020) Podcast – [Areas of research with The Open University](#)

Broad E, Methley A & Vseteckova J (2021) Podcast OU & The Parks Trust & Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust – [Spotter sheet and mindful walking](#).

Vseteckova J, Methley A, Broad E (2021) Podcast OU & The Parks Trust & Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust [Preventing brain decline while ageing](#)



Methley A, Broad E, Vseteckova J (2021) Podcast OU & The Parks Trust & Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust [Walking therapy](#)

Vseteckova J, Methley A, Broad (2021) Podcast OU & The Parks Trust & Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust [Understanding our memory](#)

Araya Y , Broad E, Vseteckova J (2022) [Engaging with our environment](#)

Joannidi H, Araya Y, Broad E & Vseteckova J (2022) [Sense of self during aging: how mindfulness and nature can help](#)

The above podcasts can be also seen on [The Parks Trust YouTube Channel](#)



Vseteckova J & Grimes C (2024) [Six ways to look after your brain health in your 20s and 30s](#)

Vseteckova J (2020) [Ageing Well Public Talks Series](#)

Vseteckova J (2019) [5 reasons why exercising outdoors is great for people who have dementia](#)

Vseteckova J (2019) [Depression, mood and exercise](#)

Vseteckova J (2019) [Five Pillars for Ageing Well](#)

Vseteckova J (2020) [Ageing Brain](#)



Methley A & Vseteckova J & Jones K (2020) [Green & Blue & Outdoor spaces](#)

Vseteckova J, Borgstrom E, Whitehouse A, Kent A, Hart A (2021) [Advance Care Planning \(ACP\)](#)

Vseteckova J (2020) [Walking the Parks with The OU and The Parks Trust](#)

Vseteckova J, Methley A, Broad E (2021) [Understanding our memory](#)

Araya Y , Broad E, Vseteckova J (2022) [Engaging with our environment](#)



Hedges V & Vseteckova J (2023)

[What should I expect when I am nearing the end of my life?](#)

Joannidi H, Araya Y, Broad E & Vseteckova J (2022)

[Sense of self during aging: how mindfulness and nature can help](#)

Mehta S, Vseteckova J (2023) [Ageing, health inequalities and person centred care](#)

Mehta S, Vseteckova J (2023) [Ageing, health inequalities and integrated approach to care](#)

Araya Y, Broad E, Vseteckova J (2023) [Ageing well by connecting and learning about nature outdoors](#)



Vseteckova J (2022) [Pharmacotherapy while ageing](#)

Joannidi H, Araya Y, Broad E & Vseteckova J (2022) [Sense of Self during ageing –
how mindfulness and nature can help](#)

Mehta S (2022) [Medicines and personalisation while ageing](#)

Gale B (2022) [How can we prepare for death while ageing?](#)

Gale B (2022) [Valuing death at home: making preparations](#)



Care and caring related

Vseteckova J, (2020) [How to age well, while self-isolating](#)

Vseteckova J, (2020) [SHORT FILM – Ageing Well in Self-Isolation](#)

Vseteckova J, (2020) [ANIMATION – Keeping healthy in Self-Isolation](#)

Vseteckova J et al (2020)
[COVID-19 The effects of self-isolation and lack of physical activity on carers](#)

Taverner P, Larkin M, Vseteckova J, et al. (2020) [Supporting adult carers during COVID-19 pandemic](#)



Robb M, Penson M, Vseteckova J, et al. (2020) [Young carers, COVID-19 and physical activity](#)

Penson M, Vseteckova J et al. (2020) [Older Carers, COVID-19 and Physical Activity](#)

Vseteckova J & Methley A (2020) [Acceptance Commitment Therapy \(ACT\) to help carers in challenging COVID-19 times](#)



AGEING WELL PUBLIC TALK SERIES WEBSITE

[Ageing Well Public Talks' Series 2023/2024](#) repository on ORDO Collections

[Ageing Well Public Talks' Series 2022/2023](#) repository on ORDO Collections

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Midlife MOT OpenLearn Course

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Home exercise no equipment – no problem *Blog*