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## PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF LGBT OLD AGE

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The elderly population composed of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT) has been increasing in recent decades not only due to a mortality reduction in childhood and adulthood, but also as a consequence of better access to health services (Orel & Fruhauf, 2015). Despite advances in laws that ensure equal rights to people of different sexual orientations, LGBT older individuals are still part of a little visible category in researches from the fields of Geriatrics and Gerontology. Thus, this review will present the book “The Lives of LGBT Older Adults: Understanding Challenges and Resilience”, organized by the American researchers Nancy A. Orel (Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH) and Christine A. Fruhauf (Department of Human Development & Family Studies, Colorado State University). It is a pioneer and auspicious publication that seeks to fill the shortage of publications addressing elderliness and the aging process of LGBT people.

In said book, the authors bring together the greatest researchers in the world when it comes to LGBT old age; in this way, the publication approaches important issues for this group which is still little researched in the gerontology context – ranging from cultural, family and individual aspects of LGBT old age, going through the health and well-being of LGBT seniors, LGBT stigma and old age, psychological theories on LGBT aging, to LGBT families and transgender elderly women. The publication comes to contribute to a better understanding of the LGBT community and its interfaces with the various psychosocial constructs

The first chapter of the book initially presents “The intersection of culture, family, and individual aspects: a guiding model for LGBT older adults”, in which the authors and organizers of the book show an overview of the increase in the number of older people in the American population, who already account for 13.3% of the total population; such demographic reversal is mainly due to an increase in life expectancy, which reaches 75 years among men, and 80 among women. The authors also address the invisibility of LGBT old age among researchers from the fields of Geriatrics and Gerontology and highlight the need for more publications that can make LGBT seniors more visible.

Then, the health and well-being of LGBT older adults are approached, with a life-span perspective. In this chapter, the authors point out the importance of a better understanding of health outcomes, social and behavioral risks that contribute to disparities in the health of the LGBT elderly. Thus, research covering risk and protective factors is a first step towards the development of a comprehensive understanding of the health of LGBT older adults throughout their lives. Finally, the elaboration and implementation of services aimed at improving health and well-being in the LGBT community are necessary.

In the third chapter, Brian de Vries presents one of the main psychosocial problems in the lives of LGBT people – social stigma. The author mentions that the LGBT community suffers an accumulation of stress due to the hetero-normative context, which may cause problems in their physical and psychological well-being. Finally, in this chapter, three types of social stigma targeted at LGBT older people are highlighted: 1) imposed stigma, which refers to the explicit form of acts of prejudice that promote violence and discrimination; 2) experienced stigma, which is reflected in the anticipated behavior of protection from discriminatory acts (the popular “coming out of the closet” as a way to strengthen gender identity) and 3) internalized stigma, which can be understood as the internalization of

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homophobia, which causes the LGBT older person to legitimize prejudice attitudes from society, increasing the stigmatization of the LGBT community.

In the fourth chapter, entitled "Theories of aging applied to LGBT older adults and their families", the author presents the main general theories on aging related to the lives of the LGBT elderly, in particular Erik Erikson's theory. Also in this chapter, the author proposes three theories on LGBT aging: the cohort theory (growing old in parallel universes), the convoy model and the successful model. Lastly, there is a discussion on the characteristics of LGBT aging theory that are distinct from general theories of aging.

In the following chapter, the authors emphasize the importance of spirituality and religiosity in end-of-life care among LGBT older people. The chapter also addresses the life-span perspective as a way to understand better the aging process of LGBT older individuals, stressing that spirituality and religiosity can assist in the care during LGBT old age. The authors conclude these chapters pointing out that, although the LGBT elderly have a prominent place in today's society, there still are many social prejudices and stigmas towards the LGBT community.

With regard to the sixth chapter, the authors discuss access to and equity of health and social services targeted at LGBT older people. They show the Canadian LGBT reality, emphasizing that, despite advances in health services offered to this public, the exclusion and marginalization of the LGBT community are still a reality in public services. Finally, they conclude the chapter highlighting strategies for engagement in social participation with an approach focused on dominance, control, access and possession.

The seventh chapter presents community resources and governmental services that are offered to LGBT seniors and their families. In this chapter, Sean Cahill talks about the fact that the LGBT elderly are experiencing their aging process in an intensely antigay society, and describes specific services such as food and housing programs that can meet the needs of the LGBT elderly community. Finally, there is a discussion on the effects of recent political changes for LGBT seniors. The next chapter approaches family issues for the elderly LGBT. The authors mention the small number of publications on families of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders; this chapter seeks to present an overview of LGBT families and their operation dynamics in today's society.

The penultimate chapter presents the aging process of transgender elderly women. The author points out that, although LGBT as a term to characterize a single group (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) is frequently used, it is known that each type has its specific characteristics. In the first part the author explains how and why older transgender women remain little studied. The second part addresses differences between the aging process of transgender people and older people of different sexual orientations. The author concludes the chapter also highlighting the little visibility of transgender elderly individuals in the spheres of Gerontology and Geriatrics.

Then, in the last chapter, the book's organizers recap the chapters that are part of this important work on LGBT old age. The authors highlight the growth in the number of researches about the LGBT elderly. In this way, this book contributes to a better understanding of the LGBT elderly community. It also emphasizes the importance of researches and interventions on social support, coping strategies and resilience, considering that these psychosocial variables can contribute to a successful LGBT aging.

Broadly speaking, it is observed that the book in question provides important and relevant reflections on psychosocial aspects of LGBT old age. Finally, increased longevity and life expectancy will consequently increase the number of elderly people in the world, including LGBT. Thus, there is a need for an equal evolution of physical and mental health devices as citizenship mechanisms to increase the visibility of LGBT individuals in old age. It is known that LGBT rights have advanced significantly in recent years, which calls for psychosocial interventions to promote a social interaction based on respect for different sexual orientations. Lastly, there is hope that this book will be translated into Portuguese in order to allow access to this publication that came to contribute to a better understanding of the aging process of the LGBT community.

## References

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*Received: Oct. 03, 201*

*Approved: Apr. 05, 2016*

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