

Transgender Seniors: Views on Aging And The Elder Care System

A Presentation At
Chicago Bridge
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Gender Bending Elders and Elder Care Systems

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A Presentation at:
2007 Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and
The National Council on Aging



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Purpose of Study

- Explore social issues, interaction with senior services & the health care system
- Responses from younger interviewees will explore their expectations for services and social support in coming elder years



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Research Methodology

- Two focus groups (N=7)
 - Recruited from transgender events & clubs
 - Dinner or lunch provided
 - \$25 stipend
 - Two hour commitment
- One-on-one follow up interviews with each participant
 - One hour duration



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Participant Demographics

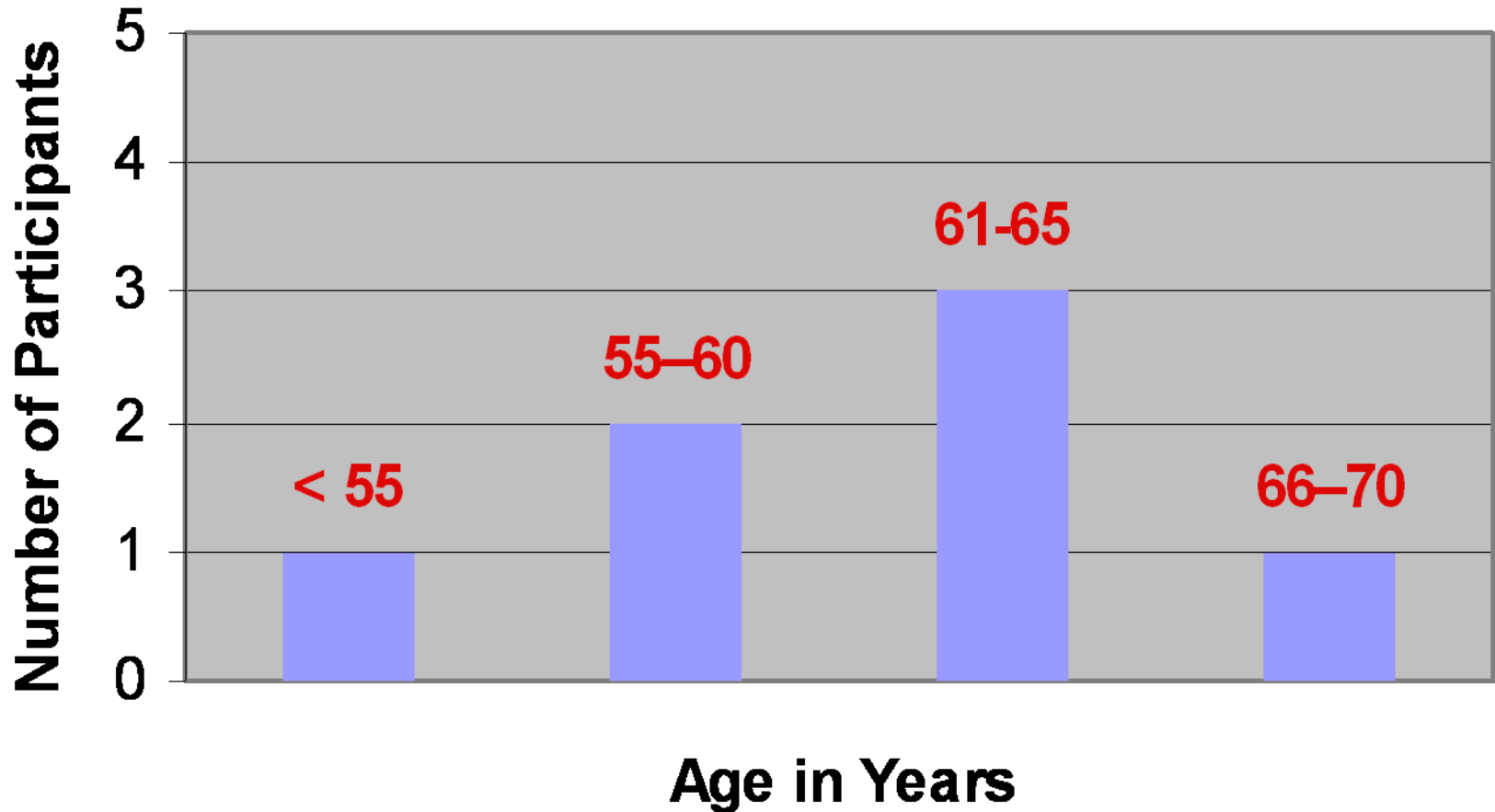


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Demographics Age in Years

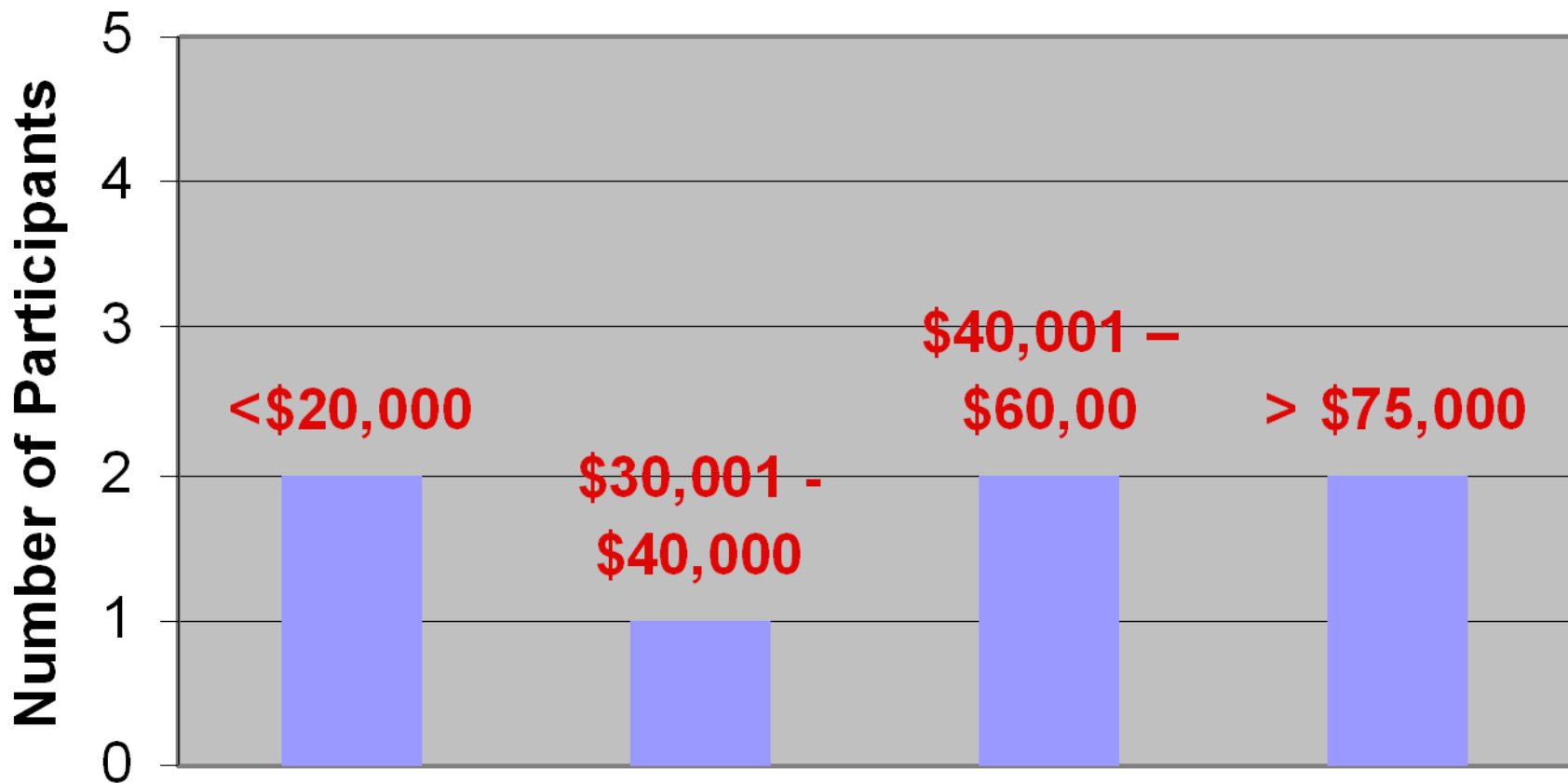


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Demographics Household Income



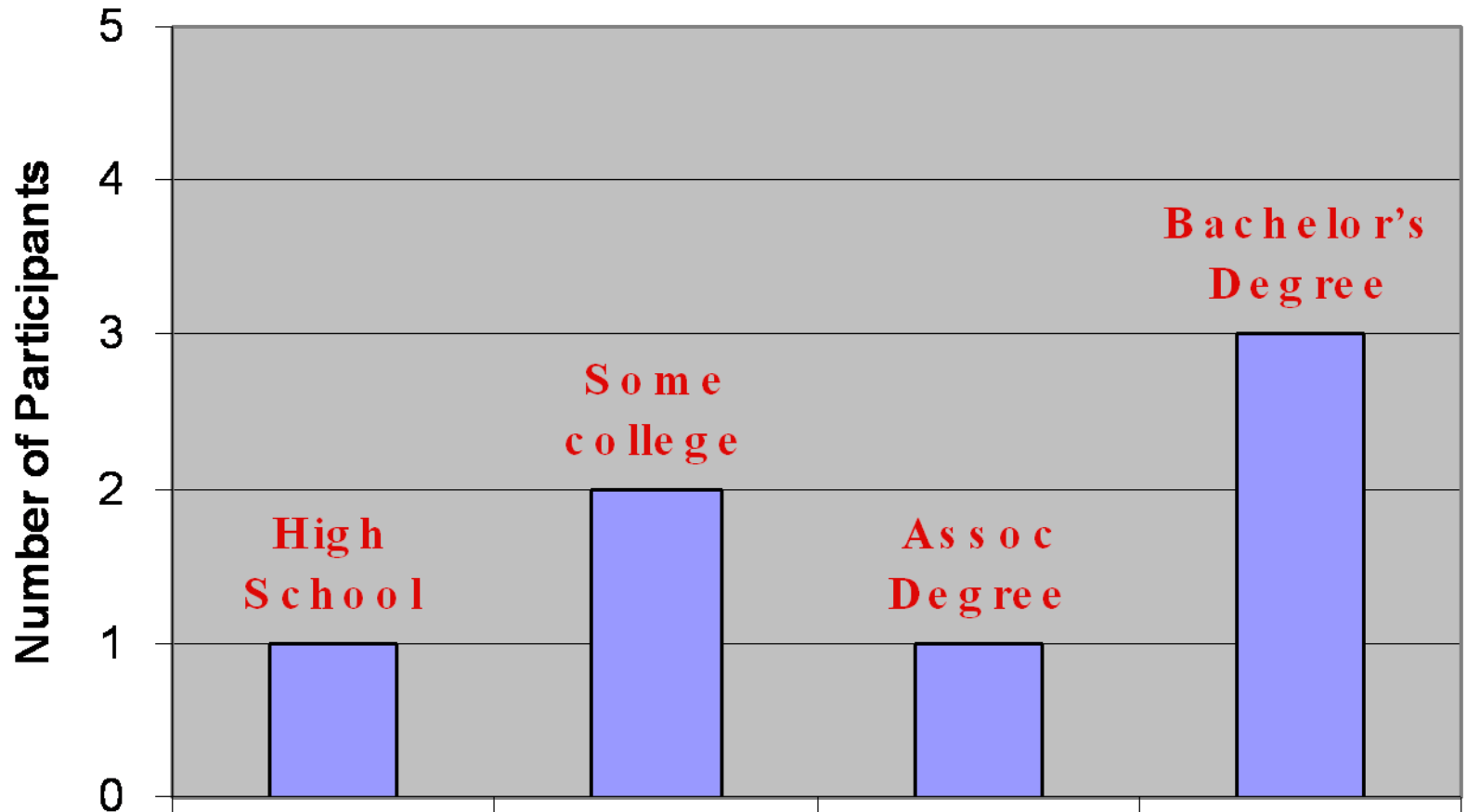
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Demographics

Educational Level



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Areas We Found

- Transition Dynamics
- Fluid Identity
- Legal Issues



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Sex-based Attributes

- Male to Female (MtF)
 - Western societal hurdles
 - Easily observed physical traits
 - Extensive social re-learning
- Female to Male (FtM)
 - Different dynamics than MtFs
 - Not addressed in this study



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Transition Dynamics

Sexual orientation

- Viewed from Presented Gender:
 - *“Are you a homosexual? No, but when I have surgery, I will be a lesbian.”*
 - *“...my daughter sees me as not as her mom. We both know what I brought to the party.”*
 - *“they see us and they are like ‘oh, a gay person’; its not like we are even in the sexual ...part of our lives.”*



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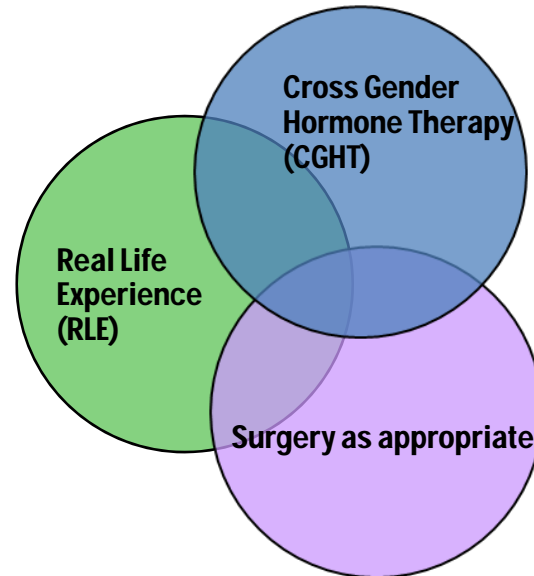
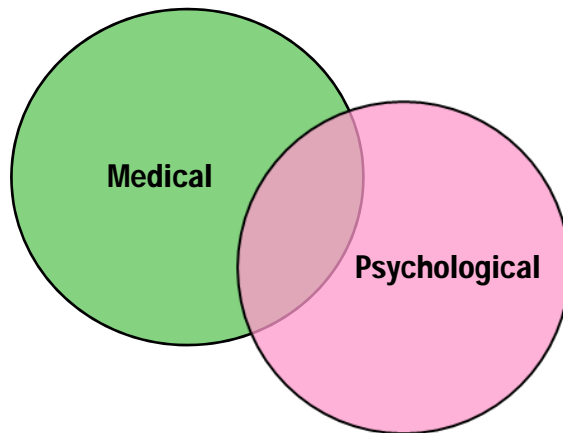
Transition Dynamics - Interventions

World Professional Association for Transgender Health
(WPATH)

Standards of Care

Care Team

Triadic Treatment Plan



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Transition Dynamics

- Physical & social attributes to female ideal
- Cross Gender Hormone Therapy (CGHT)
 - mentioned by four of the participants
- Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)
 - One in CGHT -- “[that] she doesn’t need surgery to feel who she is”
 - Another “[I’m] looking into surgery next year.”



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Benjamin Scale: A Theoretical Framework

<i>PROFILE</i>	TYPE I Transvestite Pseudo	TYPE II Transvestite Fetishistic	TYPE III Transvestite True	TYPE IV Transsexual Non-Surgical	TYPE V True Transsexual Moderate Intensity	TYPE VI True Transsexual High Intensity
Gender "Feeling"	Masculine	Masculine	Masculine (w/ less conviction)	Uncertain	Feminine "trapped in a male body"	Feminine Total inversion
Conversion operation	Not really considered	Rejected	Rejected, idea attractive	Attractive, not requested	Requested	Urgently requested, usually attained
Estrogen medication	Not interested nor indicated	Rarely interested	As an experiment Can be helpful	Needed for comfort, emotional balance	Needed as substitute for or preliminary to SRS	Required for partial relief
Psychotherapy	Not wanted, unnecessary	May be successful in favorable environment	If attempted, rarely successful as cure	As guidance only otherwise refused	Rejected, permissive psychological guidance only	Psychological guidance for symptomatic relief only

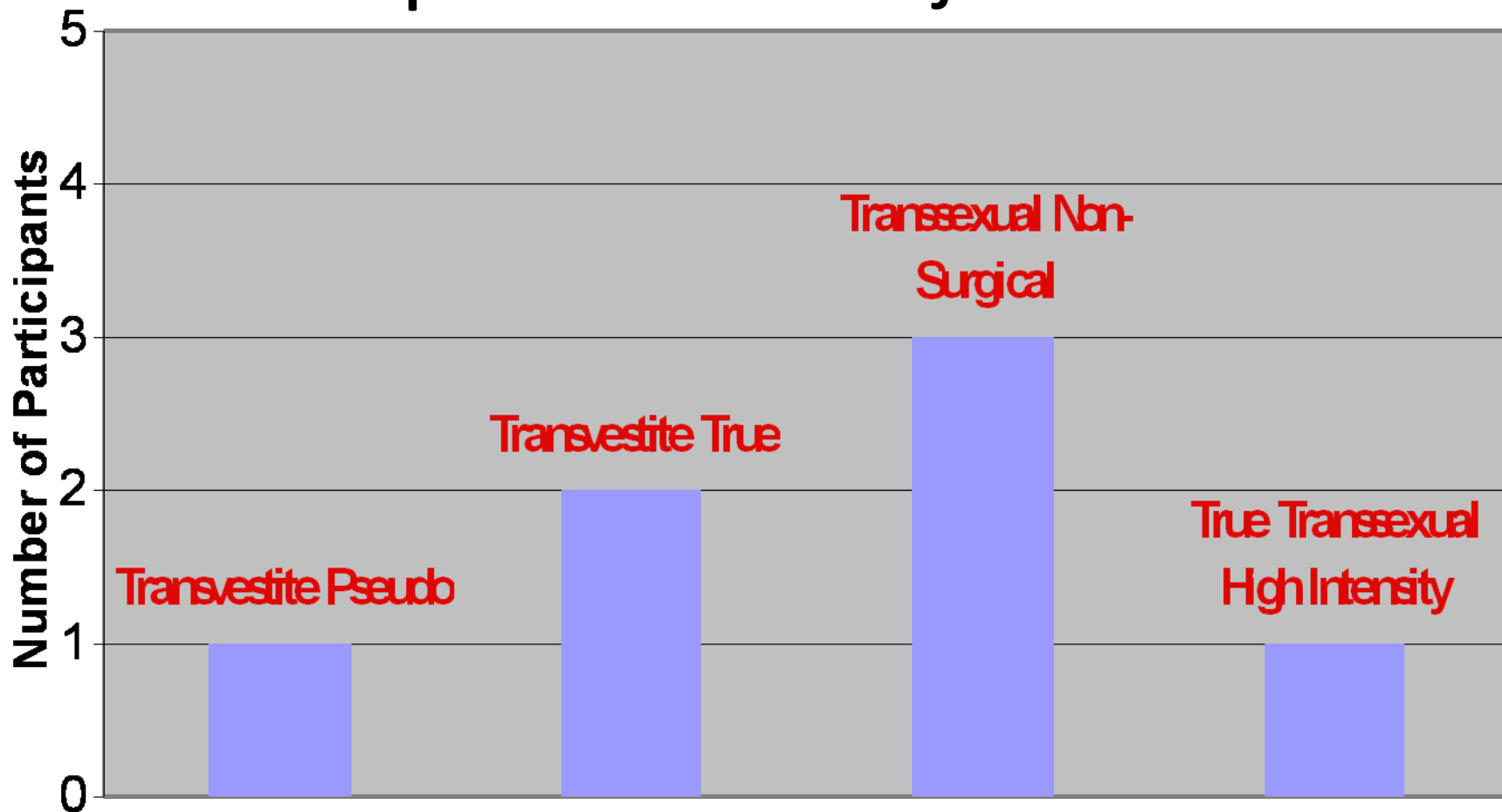


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Researcher's Ranking of Participants on Benjamin Scale



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Transition Dynamics

“Coming Out” Stages

- Shared coming out experiences
 - With gays, lesbians and bisexuals
- Transgender different experience
 - Gender is social
 - Gender validation from friends & strangers
 - Sexual orientation
 - Intimate -- not shared with casual strangers nor with many not-so-casual social contacts



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Transition Dynamics Experiences

- 6 of 7 chronological age > 55
- Only 2 full time in alternative gender > 5 yrs
- 2 more actively transitioning
- Others cross dressed only in select circumstances
 - *“we didn’t tell [our children] until they were grown and out of college ... originally I didn’t tell my wife.”*
 - *“There were a couple of cross-dressing incidents along the way...My dad caught me once was rather outraged... [But it was] like a one time incident”*

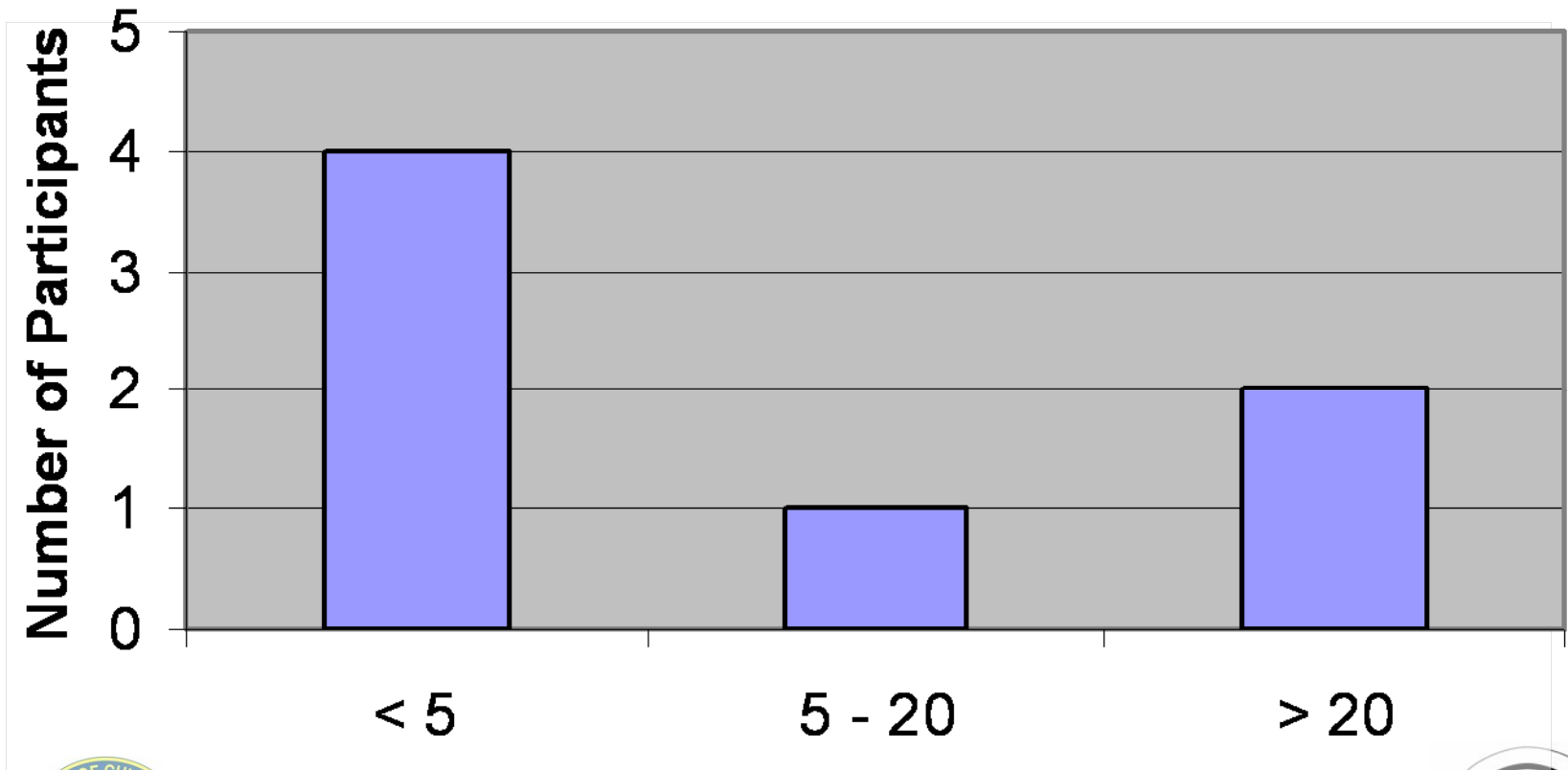


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Transition Dynamics Gender Age in Years



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Transition Dynamics Gender Age & Workplace

- Most (5 of 7)
 - currently working in male mode
 - worked their entire lives until retirement in male mode
- Fraction of work experience as women



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Transition Dynamics

- **Discrepancy between**
 - Bodily appearance (height, size, facial features)
 - Social skills
 - Posture, deportment, voice, vocabulary
 - Attire (situation & age-appropriate dress)
- **& the social situation at hand**
 - *“I am not totally passable, I can be spotted pretty easily.”*
 - *“If I am, I am. If not, then not...a little older now. When younger, I was more worried about being accepted.”*



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Transition Dynamics

Typical Senior Concerns

- **Health**
 - *“Physical health an issue”*
- **Financial Security**
 - *“I live alone...what I could afford...right economically”*
- **Social Support**
 - *“I got the dog there, and he raises enough hell to let somebody know if something ain’t right”*
- **Living Arrangements**
 - *“Condo may be better when I get older”*



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With A Gender-Related Twist

- **Healthcare**
 - “[L]ack of attention, lack of quality care because of gender expression.”
- **Support network**
 - “All of the sudden people knew who I was. They changed. They were aloof and cold.”
- **Final internment issues**
 - “The final question is how you want to be buried, as {male name} or as {female name}.”



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Fluid Identity



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Feminine vs. Masculine Expression

- [Jennifer](#) “ {male name} *could not socialize. Jennifer is all me ...as {male name} [I] was a wallflower*”
- [Amanda](#) “*After divorce I began. I found the women I was meant to be ...I know my roots are born male. I have the heart and soul of a female*”
- [Lauren](#): “ *...trying to live in the male role, [I was] bogged down, intimidated, I would die as a male...As I came out and changed, people were more accepting...I look better as a female*”.



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Male Presentation

- [Amanda](#)
 - *“Amanda Jean and {male name}... I do have to sometimes take my wife to work and they don’t know that I am Amanda.”*
 - *“And I bowl on Wednesday nights in male mode.”*
 - *“I felt at that time that I was flip-flopping; I will always feel both sides of me.”*



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Male Presentation

- Elizabeth

– *“Certain things that I do in female mode, and there are things that I do in male mode. But its not that couldn’t do them in either, its what I choose to do. Goes shopping or runs errands, take care of things. There are only certain things that the male mode would do, fishing, pistol shooting and heavy yard work”*



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Male Presentation?

- Brittany

- *“It seems like more recently the male side is just totally disappearing, instead of feeling like I am putting on a female mask...”*
- *“I have thought about that, and one of the things that I have noticed is that I find myself living in 2 or 3 worlds.”*
- *“... and as time progressed I want to spend more time in female modes.”*
- *“Socially, I feel like I am Brittany and I wish that I could integrate the two more.”*



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Self-Acceptance

- Brittany:
 - *“But I’ve been trying to integrate the two and I used to call myself a cross-dresser but now I think more am I transsexual”*
 - *“For now, I am definitely part time, and I have had a few bad experiences but I have never been assaulted and never been mugged or anything ...In my heart, I am Brittany, but this about how far I am going”*
- Amanda:
 - *“I can remember the first time I went to a {transgender convention} and I came home and was out in the yard and the kids were yelling “Dad” and I was like don’t ever say ‘Dad’...But then you realize you are your kids’ dad and if they want to call you ‘Dad’ no matter how you’re dressed then that’s okay.”*



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Gender Expression In Society

- Jennifer:
 - *“I am not totally passable.”*
 - *“I can be spotted pretty easy”*
- Jessica:
 - *“When younger, more worried about being accepted...Now that I am older, I don’t care if you like me anymore”*



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Gender Presentation Matrix

Stealth

Single-gender Presentation
no revelation of gender dysphoria

Confidential

Single-gender Presentation
selective revelation of gender dysphoria

Obvious

Dual-gender Presentation
with or without revelation

Involuntary

Single-gender Presentation
unwilling revelation



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Gender Expression Spirituality

- [Brittany](#): *“When I went to the MCC [Metropolitan Community Church] I realized I could be Christian and like who I am”*
- [Elizabeth](#): *“I’ve been involved in the church for many years, was the president of a church at one time....”*
- [Jennifer](#): *“I ... need a Higher Power”*
- [Lauren](#): *“I am spiritual not religious.”*



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Shared Concerns

- The group expressed concerns about:
 - memory loss
 - becoming incapacitated
 - loss of independence
 - care giving for others



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Shared Concerns

- [Elizabeth](#): *“My biggest issue would be personal...when I can’t do things I get really depressed. My biggest fear is being incapacitated. That and losing my marbles.”*
- [Amanda](#): *“I’m a care giver as my mate has slipped a lot.”*



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Healthcare Facilities

- Discrimination:
 - [Jennifer](#): *“What happens if I go into a hospital, will they detect hormones in my blood...be sensitive to TG issues? I have heard rumors that TG people do not get good care in hospitals, they are ignored.”*
- Life Style Issues:
 - [Jennifer](#): *“What about hormone therapy? Will my friends have to sneak it in for me? I want to keep my acrylic nails, will they let me?”*



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Maintaining Gender Identity Once In Care Facility

- [Brittney](#): *“...How would that all play out for me, would I live as Brittney, would they allow me to continue my gender expression in a nursing home?”*
- [Elizabeth](#): *“As far as a nursing home [I know someone] in assisted living and the only one that knows is the executor of the home.”*



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Legal Issues



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Voting

- [Amanda](#): *“Went to vote and neighbor did at the same time. They choose to keep the word male even though they see female attire.”*



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Federal Real ID Act

- Jessica: *“Should the government be allowed to make us change our sex? Why should they be able to force us into a sex change? Just so everything matches (license, passport) Government Issue.”*



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Financial Affairs

- Banking
 - Jennifer: “[I] was turned down once for a balance because not dressed as {male name}.”
- Eating at restaurants, paying with credit card, travel are more complicated
 - Jennifer: “I go out with myself and neighbors. Go shopping and have good time. Pay with cash.”



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Financial Affairs

- Jennifer: [Paying for hormones]: *“I pay cash. I do not turn into anything in to the insurance company. I am afraid to.”*



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End of Life Issues

- [Brittany](#): *“My sister would have care of me, power of attorney...how could you deal ...And I don’t know how that would all play out for me, would I live as Brittany, would they allow me to continue my gender expression in a nursing home”*
- [Jennifer](#): *“Finding someone who would respect your choices and carry out your wishes (i.e., funeral and how you want to be buried) I haven’t even thought about those kind of things”*



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Questions

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