

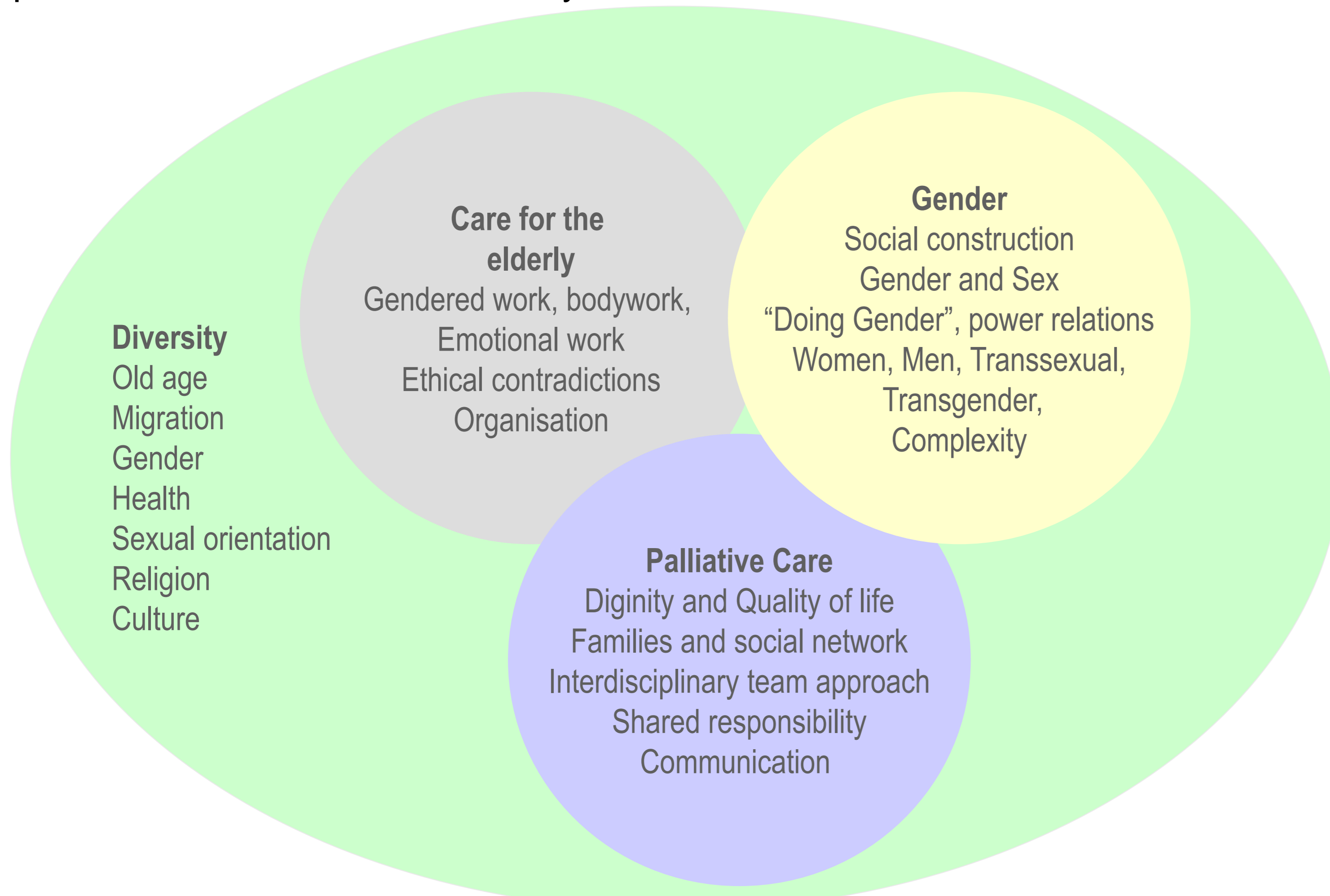
Gender sensitive Hospice and Palliative Care Culture in the Care for the Elderly

Elisabeth Reitinger, Sigrid Beyer

IFF-Department of Palliative Care and Organisational Ethics
Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt, Vienna
Hospice Austria, Vienna

BACKGROUND

Palliative care for the elderly is gaining importance. The increase in number of elderly people, the rise of multimorbidity, dementia and frailty needs new orientations within communities. When taking individual needs seriously, gender has to be acknowledged as a relevant category. Gender issues so far have been underrepresented within the context of palliative care research for elderly people. Up to 90% of the people living in long term care facilities are women, most care giving relatives and professional care givers are female, too. So the question how client-orientation can be organised in a gender-sensitive way is a challenge every day. In care settings at home – family care, professional care, informal care – also most of the caring persons are female. Many of the care situations at home are connected with financial losses, loss of job and high demanding living situations. In 2009 86% of the volunteers in hospice and palliative care in Austria were women. Within society, care work in general, hospice and palliative care for the elderly especially, needs more attention. Care work is mostly defined as individual and “private” concern that is supported by public funding. For example informal care in Austria came to approx. 3.000 Mio € in the year 2011 compared to 2264,70 Mio € in public long term care allowances (Schneider 2011). This shows the enormous impact, economic and ethical dimension of hospice and palliative care work for the elderly.



RESULTS

- ◆ Different perspectives for integration of a gender sensitive hospice and palliative care culture encompass expertise from elderly care e.g. dementia care, hospice and specialised palliative care and gender discourse.
- ◆ Care-work has to be acknowledged as important responsibility within society and taken over in a gender-fair way. As human beings we all are interconnected and live in relational autonomy. This has to be taken in mind especially for gender-sensitivity.
- ◆ Intersectionality, that means the interaction between gender, age, body, migration and other social categories plays an important role in hospice and palliative care for frail elderly. Diversity also includes different cultural and religious backgrounds as well as sexual orientation.
- ◆ Body work is an essential part of care for frail elderly. It includes touching in the meaning of physical and spiritual communication. Listening and story telling are central competences. Ambivalences in care occur as regards sexuality of clients, high emotional involvement and devaluing of bodywork within society.
- ◆ Interdisciplinary teamwork has to serve the needs of frail elderly women and men. Cooperation between care-workers and medical doctors as well as other professionals has to be organised on equal terms. Democratic leadership therefore has to support non-hierarchical communication and power-sensitivity.

References

- Backes, Gertrud, M. and Wolfinger, Martina (2010): Perspektiven einer gender-körpersensiblen Altenpflege. p. 45-60
Beyer, Sigrid (2010): Gendersensibilität in Alten- und Pflegeheimen. Chance und Ressourcen. p. 315-326
Eisl, Christof (2010): Gender-Betrachtungen aus der Hospiz- und Palliativpraxis. p. 147-162
Feichtner, Angelika (2010): Palliative und Gender Care im Pflegeheim. p. 131-146
Gröning, Katharina (2010): Gender und Care – diskursanalytische Aspekte und Reinterpretationen eines gesellschaftlichen Problems. p. 165-180
Hamm, Christian (2010): Village-Pflegeetage in Berlin – Europas erste lesbischschwule Pflegeeinrichtung. p. 255-265
Heller, Birgit (2010): Gender und Spiritualität am Lebensende. p. 61-72
Höfler, Anne-Elisabeth (2010): Betrachtungen zu Leitung in Hospizarbeit und Palliative Care unter Gender-Aspekten. p. 245-253
Hofmann, Rebekka (2010): Der berührte Mensch. Berührungspotenziale erkennen in der Betreuung und Begleitung alter und sterbender Menschen. p. 73-84
Kooij, Cora van der (2010): Gender und Mäeutik. Entmedikalisierung und Neuprofessionalisierung der Pflege. p. 87-99
Langehennig, Manfred (2010): In der Angehörigenpflege ein richtiger „Mann“ bleiben – Anmerkungen zur genderkonstruierten Angehörigenpflege. p. 197-209
Lehner, Erich (2010): Schmerz und Repression – die Bedeutung von Gender im Erleben von Leid. p. 231-242
Pleschberger, Sabine und Wenzel, Claudia (2010): Die versteckte Kategorie – Erkenntnisse zur Bedeutung von Geschlecht aus der Forschungstätigkeit in häuslicher Palliativversorgung. p. 181-196
Reitinger, Elisabeth (2010): Gender: Care und palliative Kultur in Organisationen der Altenhilfe. p. 299-313
Reitinger, Elisabeth und Beyer, Sigrid (2010): Gender-Care: verschiedene Sichtweisen für eine gelingende Integration. p. 9-18
Schnabl, Christa (2010): Gender – Care – Gerechtigkeit – Fürsorgearbeit als Gestaltungsaufgabe moderner Gesellschaften. p. 21-32
Schneider, Ulrike (2011): Gesellschaftliche und ökonomische Aspekte der Pflege von Angehörigen. Vortrag im Rahmen der ersten Jahreskonferenz der Interessengemeinschaft pflegender Angehöriger, Vienna 30. März 2011
Straschil, Lucia (2010): Demenz, Care und Gender – ein Bericht aus der Praxis der Angehörigenberatung. p. 101-115
Trauner, Wolfgang (2010): Altenhilfe und ältere MigrantInnen – ein interkultureller Gestaltungsraum. p. 267-281
Traunsteiner, Bärbel (2010): Diversity & (Health) Care – soziale Vielfalt als Bereicherung in der Pflege. p. 283-297
Walser, Angelika (2010): Autonomie und Angewiesenheit: ethische Fragen einer relationalen Anthropologie. p. 33-43
Wegleitner, Klaus und Heimerl, Katharina (2010): Gender in der ambulanten Pflege: eine unterrepräsentiert Perspektive. p. 211-229
Windisch, Ingrid (2010): Gib mir den Mantel, den ganzen! Palliative Care in der hausärztlichen Betreuung von Frauen im Alter: ein narrativer Zugang. p. 117-129

AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The aim of the presented project is to unfold the diversity of meanings of gender in the context of hospice and palliative care for frail elderly within long term care settings and other care contexts. The “doing gender” of care situations and the complex interactions between individual, symbolic and structural gender effects are subject to the analyses.

- ◆ What does gender mean for the needs of frail elderly women and men?
- ◆ How does gender affect care interactions: Informal care, professional care, care within organisations?
- ◆ What does a gender sensitive care culture need within organisations and society?

METHODS

In following those questions we organised a four steps process. 1) A literature review was made and key researchers and experts in the field in German speaking countries were identified. 2) We invited these experts, practitioners and post graduate students to a transdisciplinary workshop where inputs and discussions were moderated. 3) A book publication interrelated all the important findings. 4) 5 Expert interviews followed.

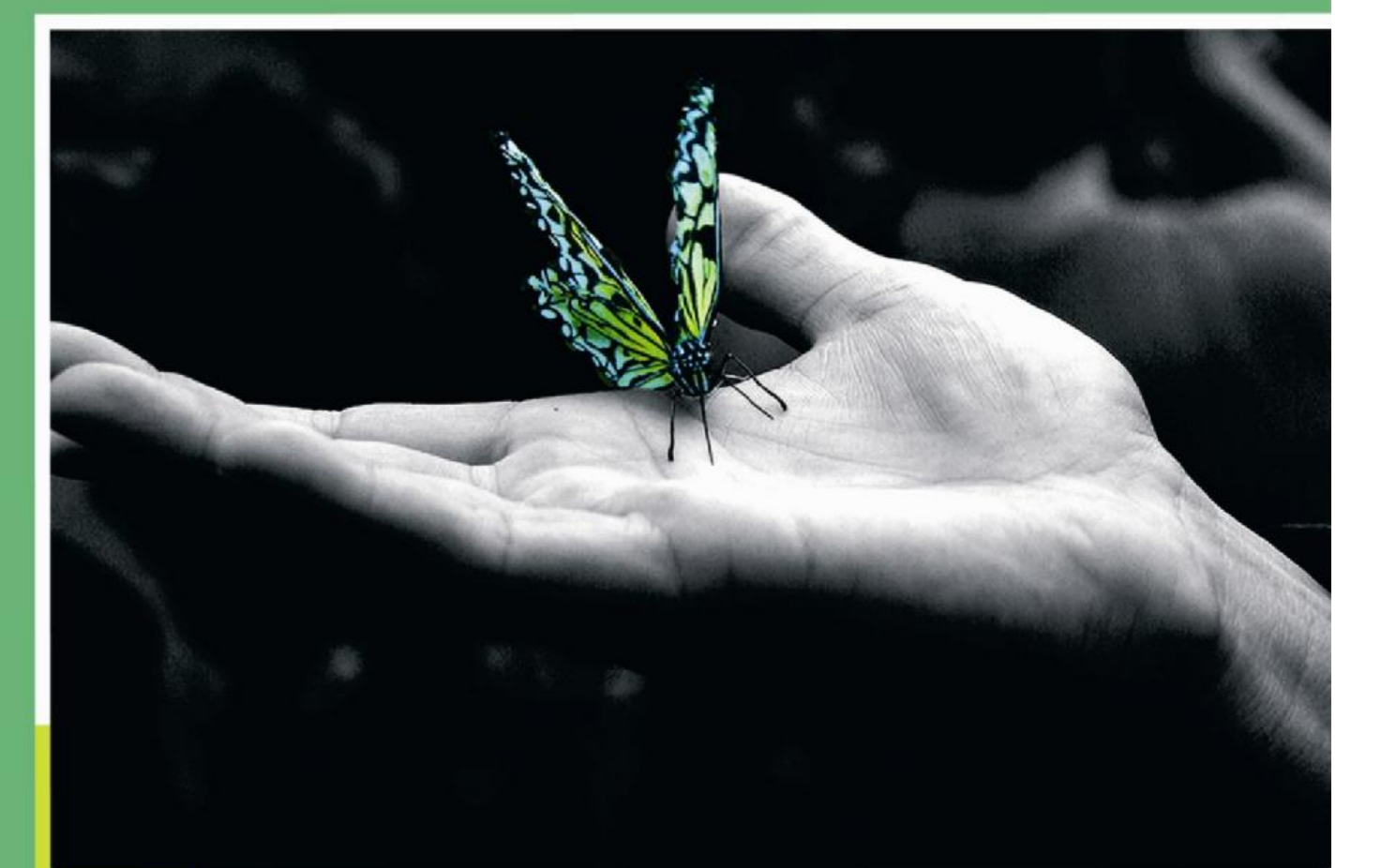
CONCLUSIONS

As our findings suggest gender sensitivity is a multidimensional process that always has to do with attentiveness, interaction, reflection and structures, the following aspects seem to be essential.

- ◆ “Doing gender” can involve appreciative and irritating interventions that both have supportive effect. Gendered life stories have to be integrated into care giving for frail elderly, i.e. needs on the basis of diverse biographies have to be taken seriously. At the same time structural circumstances like traditional family roles and institutional rules that also include violence have to be questioned. Gender relations dominating our society also influence hospice and palliative care for frail elderly and needs more attention.
- ◆ In palliative and hospice care for the elderly gender, culture and political dimensions always play an interconnected and important role. There is a need of much higher provision and resource supply by our societies.
- ◆ Care has to be integrated into every day live. Changes in the attitudes towards aging, gender and sensitivity to all other aspects of diversity can show the richness of our different cultures in society and support an ethics of affective solidarity.

Elisabeth Reitinger, Sigrid Beyer (Hrsg.)

Geschlechtersensible
Hospiz- und Palliativkultur
in der Altenhilfe



Mabuse-Verlag

Funding

The research-project on “Gender-Care” is funded by the “Jubiläumsfonds of the Austrian National Bank”, the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research and the University of Klagenfurt.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all authors and colleagues who contributed and supported the project, especially Eva Eggenberger and Anna Hostalek.

Contact of Presenting Author

Ass. Prof. in Dr. in Elisabeth Reitinger
Department of Palliative Care and Organisational Ethics
IFF-University of Klagenfurt
Schottenfeldgasse 29/1, 1070 Vienna, Austria
elisabeth.reitinger@aau.at

Hospice Austria is the national organisation of more than
200 Hospice and Palliative Care Institutions. www.hospiz.at

