

*Barriers to Service for  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender  
(LGBT) Seniors—and is it on the Agenda?*

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Research Symposium  
March 12, 2011



*Problem Definition and Agenda-Setting:  
LGBT Aging Issues*

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## Framework

- Cobb and Elder (1983). *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*
- Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976). Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process. *American Political Science Review*, 70, 126-138
- Stone (2002). *Policy Paradox The Art of Political Decision Making*
- Kingdon (2003). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*



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Methods:

- This is an exploratory study undertaken to understand how social issues, LGBT aging issues, become defined as a problem and then raised as an issue on the public's agenda.
- I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with members of the Chicago Task Force on LGBT Aging.



## *Barriers to Service for LGBT Seniors—and is it on the Agenda?*

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### Methods:

- Interviews include representatives from:
  - American Association for Retired Persons (AARP)
  - The Chicago Department of Public Health's Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health
  - State's Attorney's Office, GLBT Liaison and Hate Crime Specialist
  - Editor of a local LGBT newspaper
  - One Alderman representing a district with many LGBT residents
  - Center on Halsted
  - Howard Brown Health Center
  - Chicago Department on Aging
  - Heartland Care Services
  - Council for Jewish Elderly (CJE) Senior Life



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## Research Questions:

- 1) What are the respondents paying attention to?
- 2) How do they define the issues?
- 3) Who do they see as relevant publics?



# *Are the issues that LGBT Seniors face on the public agenda?*

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*What are the audiences an issue is expanded to?*

- 1) Identification groups
- 2) Attention groups
- 3) Attentive public
- 4) General public



## *Are the issues that LGBT Seniors face on the public agenda?*

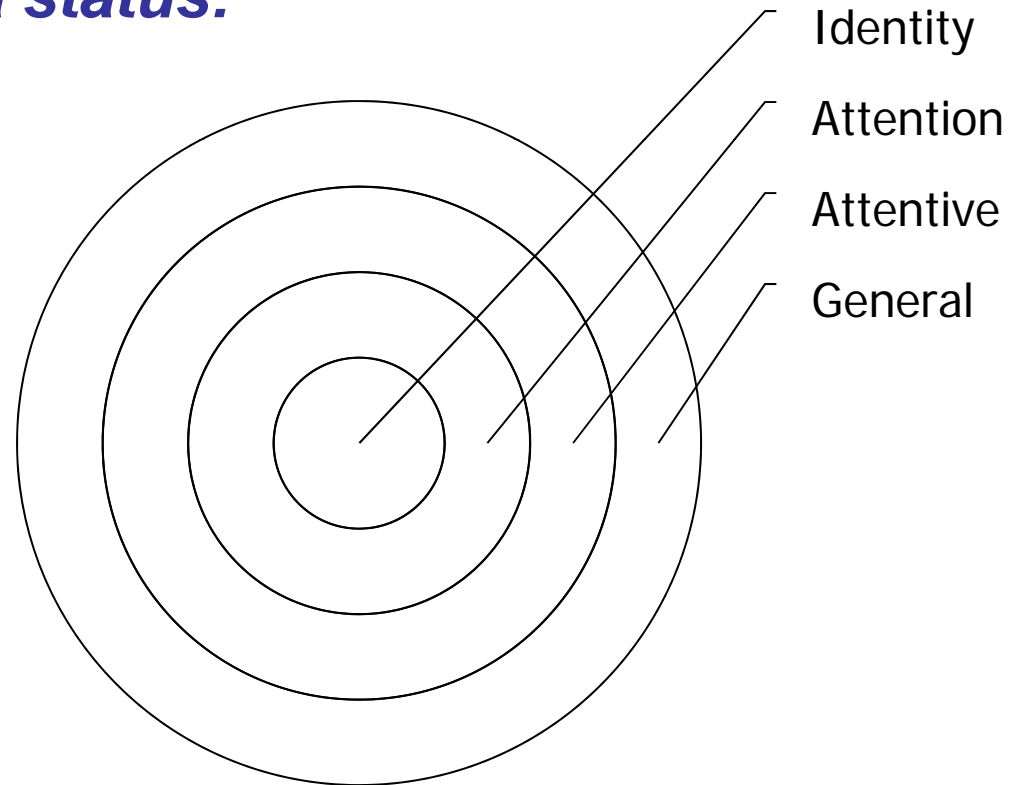
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- Who do respondents see as relevant publics?
- Identity Groups
  - Healthcare workers and advocates
  - LGBT serving organizations
  - LGBT community
- Attention Groups
  - Politicians
  - AOA officials
  - Business community

# *Are the issues that LGBT Seniors face on the public agenda?*

## **3 requirements for a problem to be elevated to agenda status:**

1. Widespread attention or awareness,
2. Shared concern by a sizeable portion of the population that some type of action is required,
3. A shared perception that the matter is an appropriate concern of some governmental unit.





*What are the barriers that LGBT Seniors face when trying to access services?*

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1. Isolation
2. Invisibility
3. Cultural competency
4. Accessing services
5. Healthcare
6. Housing



*What are the issues  
that are specific to LGBT Seniors?*

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7. Financial hardship
8. Support network
9. Legal issues
10. Transitioning later in life
  - Loss of support systems
  - Loss of economic security
  - Self esteem and guilt



## *Solutions to service delivery?*

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### *Micro Level*

- Education and training regarding
  - The presence of LGBT seniors
  - Culturally competent services
- Comprehensive model of care, one stop shopping that provides culturally competent care
- Include aging issues in all advocacy work

### *Macro Level*

- Equal legal protections for all LGBT people
- Amending the Older American's Act to include all vulnerable populations, including S.O and G.I.



## *Barriers to Service for LGBT Seniors—and is it on the Agenda?*

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### *Conclusions:*

- The issues of LGBT Seniors are not on the public agenda.
- Although there are barriers to service that all seniors face, issues that have specific ramifications for LGBT include isolation, invisibility, cultural competency, access to services, healthcare, housing, financial hardship, support systems, legal issues and transitioning.
- Solutions include education and training, more comprehensive care models and including aging issues in all advocacy. Larger macro solution are to extend legal protections and benefits to all LGBT people and to amend the Older American's Act.